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Cultural and Institutional Memory as (a) Means of Progress (Part II)

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Marie de France's *Eliduc*—A Repentant Sinner. Guildeluec's Cultural Memory as a Means of Spiritual Progress

Abstract: In this article I want to discuss the importance of cultural memory within the plot of one of the *lais* written by Marie de France and to show that the character who is the "custodian" of cultural memory is also the one who can solve the crisis brought about by the other characters' alienation from traditions. I will argue that this cultural background is the Christian tradition, which is completed by, and not opposed to, some pre-Christian (profoundly natural, rather than super-natural) knowledge, which precedes the cultural one.
I will use Jan Assmann's theory on cultural memory, in order to identify the elements of the cultural background which is defining for *Eliduc*, the longest *lai* written by Marie de France. Discussing the issue of cultural memory in this *lai* is relevant, as the scholar can identify the source of Guildeluec's superiority, namely her position of guardian of cultural memory. The elements of the cultural memory: Christian principles, Celtic heritage and popular knowledge, work harmoniously to bring about the spiritual progress of all the characters.

Keywords: medieval civilization, women's writings, courtly love, Christian tradition, French literature

Introduction

Marie de France's *lais* have been analyzed from various points of view, and the matter of the poetics of memory was extensively treated by Logan E. Whalen. What I want to emphasize is the fact that within the narrative of the *lais* (which, she claims, are stories of Breton origin) there is a cultural background with rules that cannot be broken. Starting from Jan Assmann's theory on cultural memory, I will argue that this cultural background is not some oral, popular belief, but rather some well-organized and documented knowledge, namely the Christian tradition. This cultural memory is completed by, and not opposed to, some pre-Christian natural (profoundly natural rather than super-natural) knowledge, which precedes the cultural one.

I will exemplify these ideas by analyzing *Eliduc*, a very complex *lai*, which is the longest of those written by her. Christian cultural memory has a crucial role and justifies, to a certain point, the characters' actions and reactions, but, more than this, it provides the solution for the crisis brought about by the characters' alienation from their inner self, and makes possible the positive dénouement of this particular *lai*. Furthermore, I want to emphasize the role played by a woman, who is the "custodian" of cultural memory and, thus, the one who can control and use it to the benefit of all characters.

Creating Cultural Memory—Applying Jan Assmann's Theory to the *Lais* of Marie de France

At the beginning of this paper it is necessary to point out the main elements of cultural memory and in what way it is created and preserved. When I mention Assmann's theory, I actually refer to only two of his tenets, firstly the fact that the appearance of writing brought some new elements into the process of transmitting the inherited tradition, increasing thus its complexity, and secondly that religion is a crucial element in shaping cultural memory. I will show that for the Western Europe in the Middle Ages, the religion that was responsible for fashioning cultural memory is Christianity.

According to Assmann, the purpose of writing is twofold, on the one hand to remember things and on the other hand to communicate information to people who are at a certain distance, but the former role was the first and the most important (*Religion and Cultural Memory* 85). Writing added new facets to the transmission of cultural memory, and one aspect is the matter of interpretation, as something written at a certain period may not mean the same thing decades or centuries after that. Even if it is forgotten, it can re-emerge, but its meaning would be different; as Assmann asserts: "With the appearance of writing on the horizon, tradition increases in complexity. It ceases to be based exclusively on memory, but with the assistance of the media of external storage, it also acquires new forms of forgetting and re-remembering, of displacement and renewed access, of latency and return, of renaissance" (*RCM* 100). Marie de France is aware of this fact, as in her prologue she mentions the custom of "glossing" a written text, by which she means supplying a new interpretation for the "ancient" text.

Marie equally emphasizes the importance of writing for creating an image of the present for the future generations to remember and she undertakes her project of recording the Breton *lais*, so they were not forgotten. By doing so, she becomes an active agent in preserving and even fashioning cultural memory. This is possible because Marie de France is obviously a learned woman,[1] mindful of what cultural memory presupposes.

When discussing the importance of writing as an element of confirming the communitarian memory (tradition) of a group, it must be pointed out that "although writing played a crucial role in the formation (and crystallization) of cultural memory, it is by no means the only medium of preserving it" (Assmann, *Collective Memory* 131). Rituals are important means of conveying the cultural tradition through time, and also pictorial images, which have been found in churches and cathedrals, could have such a role. It is common knowledge that Christianity had been well-established by the 12th century and its dogmas were written down, having already generated a specific culture. On the other hand, in order for people to be aware of Christian religion as the cultural tradition of the Middle Ages, they did not need to have access to written sources. The symbolic representations and, again, the rituals were mediums of displaying the common cultural (educated) memory and sermons on different topics were channels of conveying and repeating it, as well as means of refashioning it, by applying it to a certain community.

An interesting aspect that emerged while researching the manuscripts of her works is that, although there is a manuscript (dating, probably, from the 12th century, Kruger 172) that preserves all her *lais* and it contains *Guigemar* (in whose prologue she names herself as the author of the *lais*), there are later manuscripts, which consider her works anonymous. One conclusion could be that "the anonymity of the *lais* originally composed by the Bretons, which Marie claims as her sources, re-emerges in the course of the 13th century, as the poems become absorbed into the general corpus of unattributed vernacular narrative" (Kinoshita 204). So, although she records the *lais* and although they might have influenced other *lais*, her verses appear to have been forgotten and then rediscovered,[2] so cultural memory is preserved, but the preserver is not.

I have already mentioned Assmann's observation that there were several means of transmitting cultural memory. The starting point of tradition in general was a common set of customs which made up the so-called "bonding memory," which represented a cohesive element that generated relations between different members of a particular community, stabilizing thus the inner structure of pre-modern society.

[1] She knows how to structure her Prologue (*A Companion to Marie de France* 2), so that it contains all the elements according to the classical tradition of rhetoric (*captatio benevolentiae*—capturing the goodwill of the audience; *auctoritas*—citing authoritative sources: on the one hand Priscian, the ancient Latin grammarian, and on the other hand the Breton oral sources, which may be connected with the Celtic, probably renowned, bards; and *causa scribendi*—the reason for writing).

[2] This could be an example of the situation of "return" and "renaissance" mentioned by Assmann (*Religion and Cultural Memory* 100).

It is this type of memory which "commits the individual to fulfill the obligations he committed himself to" (Assmann, *RCM* 10). The "bonding memory" was first established through rituals, a fact which shows that religion has always been necessary for preserving and creating tradition and, implicitly, for shaping human society and its rules.

When reading the *lais* written by Marie de France, the researcher notices the pervasiveness of the Christian element in her writings, which is evidence to the embeddedness of Christian principles in the inner fabric of social and individual mentality. In all her *lais,* Christianity is present when she refers to rituals, morality, or laws, but most of all through the general message and final dénouement of each *lai*, which present a Christian solution, if one is needed for a certain crisis, and equally if there is an injustice done, it is righted.

What we see at work in the *lais* of Marie de France is an example of how the (ideal) society applies (or should apply) the principles, which have been accepted as regulating. These basic regulations are referred to by using the term "canon," which "is used to identify a principle that elevated a culture's connective structure to a level at which it becomes impervious to time and change" (Assmann, *Cultural Memory and Early Civilization* 4). More precisely, Assmann defines this term as "a principle, a norm or value that is far more binding than an individual code…" (*CMEC* 98). This underlying principle, which is the basis of cultural memory in the 12th century, is Christianity.

The fact that Christianity was the established cultural background in the 12th century comes as no surprise, yet what I want to emphasize is that although other influences (like Celtic magic stories, or the courtly love code, which was morally subversive) are felt in Marie's stories, they are secondary to the Christian cultural memory which provides the answer to every dilemma that characters have to face. It is only by obeying Christian principles that characters can find a positive outcome for the conflict they have to face. This situation is visible in all her *lais*, and I have chosen *Eliduc* to exemplify it.

Christian Precepts—Eliduc and Guildeluec's Cultural Memory

When discussing cultural memory in connection with Marie de France, one must stress that this poetess is a vivid instance of transforming oral popular narratives into cultural written stories, as she states the fact that she wants to record the *lais* she has heard, and that she wants to preserve them in writing, so that they would not be forgotten.[3] It has been mentioned that Marie de France, together with Geoffrey of Monmouth (*History of the Kings of Britain*) and Wace (in his *Brut*) were the first to write about "the matière de Bretagne" (Whalen, *A Companion to Marie de France* 31-32), but what is even more significant is the fact that she feels quite confident of the importance of her task, which will bring her fame.[4] It was clearly noticed that "Marie de France was acutely aware not only of her role in the preservation of cultural memory, but of the transforming effects of writing, and written poetry in particular, upon and within oral tradition" (Bloch 19). The fact that she presents her writings to the king proves that she believes them to be valuable. Since the declared purpose for writing the *lais* is to preserve them to memory, i.e. to make them easy to be remembered, it stands to reason that she intends for her *lais* to become the version of the (probably familiar) stories which is to be disseminated from that moment on.

[3] *Gugemar*: Volentiers devreit-hum oir Cose k'est bonne a retenir… Oiez, Segnurs, Ke dit Marie/ Ki en sun tens pas ne s'ublie.—Willing should we listen to things which are good to remember… Listen Lordlings, to what Marie says, she who in her time is not forgotten (lines 1-2, 5-6).

[4] …de Latin en Romaunz traire; Mais ne me fust guaires de pris/ Tany se sunt alters entremis. Des Lais pensai k'oï aveie… (…translating from Latin to Romance […] was not to bring me fame, since so many others have done it, Than I thought of the lais I had heard… Prologue, 30-33).

The issue of memory is one of the most important and recurrent themes of her *lais*, not only because she writes down from her memory[5] (what she supposedly heard from Breton bards), but also because she uses a style that makes it easy for her *lais* to be remembered: "Her works reveal a concern for creating images that will be easily retained in the imagination of her audience" (Whalen, *Marie de France and the Poetics of Memory* 18). Marie records the cultural memory of the Bretons and, by translating it, she transfers it to Britain and augments the cultural memory of the Anglo-Norman French speaking aristocracy.

Yet, besides these general considerations which are quite obvious and are well supported with common quotations from her prologues, I want to go deeper and to identify the inner frame that permeates all her *lais* and how it can explain the characters actions and reactions. Besides recording the *lais* as such, Marie de France also records the spiritual mood of her time and the beliefs that guided the peoples' understanding of the world. Once one starts analyzing the importance of Christianity as the major principle that defined the characters' horizon of expectations, one can better interpret their choices.

Eliduc is a Christian knight and as such he is aware of his duty towards his wife and the impossibility of any relationship with another woman. More so, since he is a paid mercenary of the king in Exeter, he cannot deceive his lord's daughter, as this would mean betraying his code of honor. The knightly code of honor and the courtly love conventions form a set of principles that work together and create a framework for *lais* (as well as for medieval romances, in general). The third underlying structural elements are the miraculous occurrences, which are probably of Celtic origin. Such an assumption is natural, as the Celtic heritage was strong in the Breton area in the 12th century, as well as in Cornwall, and close to the place where Eliduc presumably landed.

The way he and Gillardun fall in love is like an enchantment, i.e. love strikes like an arrow (304-305) and it is the moment when Eliduc realizes that his Christian cultural principles start being in contradiction with the *fin' amor*[6] code. Such an opposition was a general occurrence (Verdon 111) and it is only a profound understanding of Christian teaching that can bring harmony in the society projected by Marie de France. Sandra Pierson Prior advances the possibility that "one could perhaps explain the differences [between Eliduc and Guildeluec's behaviors] as a case of a poorly understood and inadequately embraced set of ideals and a nobler, more sincere fulfilment of those same ideals" (132). Obviously, the ideals Prior refers to are the Christian ideals which seem to be finally understood by Eliduc only at the end of the *lai*.

According to the Christian faith, Eliduc proves his weakness of character and lack of determination, by falling into temptation, i.e. falling in love with Guillardun and deceiving her. Eliduc breaks the knightly code of honor when he lies by omission and does not severe any connection with the young lady, once he realizes the nature of her feelings. He is truly confused and undecided and such a flaw, although not uncommon to human nature, is a crucial fault in a man, who, according to the Christian teachings, is supposed to be the head of a family. His culpability is further increased by the fact that the girl explicitly places her complete trust in him, and overtly declares her love ("Sur tute rien vus aim è crei," *Eliduc* 537).

Socially speaking, Eliduc is the king's mercenary (one of many), in England, but he has proven himself very skillful in war and thus useful for the king and even desirable as a son-in-law. The game of chess played by the king, in his young daughter's room, just when Eliduc has come to see him, and the fact that he introduces the knight to his daughter in very laudatory terms could be an invitation, on the part of the king, to negotiations for a possible marriage (Whalen, *ACMF* 114). This is perhaps hinted by the king's actions especially, since it was marriage, or rather his refuse to marry his daughter, that brought about the war that was won by Eliduc (*Eliduc* 95-96). Social conventions considered such a marriage (between a knight and his lord's daughter) to be advisable and quite beneficial for both parties. The king and his

[5] *Prologue*: Plusurs en ai oiz conter, /Nes vueil laissier ne oblier.—Many I have heard told and I do not want to neglect or forget them (lines 33-40).

[6] *fin'amor* is the medieval Occitan phrase for *courtly love*, which is an expression coined in the 19th century.

daughter might have been confounded by Eliduc's refusal to commit; however, the reader knew the reason.

Understandably for almost all his sojourn in Exeter, Eliduc is tormented by his guilt ("En grant peine fu Eliduc," *Eliduc* 476), knowing that he brings dishonor to his wife as he breaks his promise to her (*Eliduc* 474-475). Yet, he rejoices in the young princess' company and openly accepts her declarations of love. Such a game is in accordance with the conventions of *fin' amor* narratives, but this does not excuse the deceiver, who, in the end, lures her from her home to an unknown and dishonorable situation.[7] Even if, by the time of the elopement, Eliduc is not a mercenary for her father anymore, still he should feel some moral responsibility towards the king, whom he actually betrays. However, in this situation, Guillardun's fault is even greater, as she runs from home and implicitly disobeys and deserts her father, whose blessing she has not received. It is to be noted that this fault is not emphasized by Marie, and no clear atonement is mentioned, but neither is Guillardun later reunited with her father.

I have pointed out that, according to the Christian principles, the two lovers (the potentially adulterous husband and the disobedient daughter) are guilty, so a divine punishment is to be expected and it takes the form of the storm that hits the ship. Such an event is profoundly Christian, since the sea has always been regarded as an instrument of showing God's will and power, and the biblical episode of Jonah and the whale is such an example. Not unlike the sailors on Jonah's boat, Eliduc's *squire* (the French term is *esquier*—and could be translated as *henchman*, *follower* or even *sailor*) suggests throwing Guillardun over board, after he discloses Eliduc's circumstances. He points out that Eliduc's behavior is against God and against the law, and also against righteousness and against faith ("Cuntre Deu, è cuntre lei,/ Cuntre dreiture, è cuntre fei", *Eliduc* 837-838). The researcher can feel here how the social (law and righteousness) and the religious (God and faith) consequences of his actions are emphasized. In terms of cultural memory, both codes, the inward spiritual and the external legal ones are transgressed.

Guillardun is so shocked that she faints and seems dead, and thus, in a way, she receives her punishment. The squire becomes the object of Eliduc's fury and revenge, and thus for his *hubris* (of rising against his master's decisions) he is killed and thrown overboard, receiving the death he has envisaged for his mistress.

Eliduc commits murder, a guilt that is added to the one of deceiving a young innocent woman. However, he proves again to be an unrivalled warrior and a determined sailor, as he takes the helm and sails the ship to the shore, fighting the harsh sea and saving everybody! His prowess in battle and strength on the boat are qualities admired by 12th-century audiences, and his honest grief when his beloved is considered dead could be regarded as repentance for his sins. The humble sorrowful Eliduc is not an impious person anymore, so he is not outside the laws of the church anymore, even if he does not disclose the source of his mourning to his wife.

I want to point out that Eliduc was not unknowledgeable of the traditions of the land and of the wisdom that springs from it. The sayings he uses when talking about his king's unjust behavior towards him, in the first part of the lai, is such an example:

> Li vilein dit par repruvier
> Quant tence à sun charier,
> Qu'amur de Seignur n'est pas fieuz
> S'il est sages è vedzieuz.
> Ki leauté tient à sun Seignur,

[7] His choice to take her from her high social position and to bring her to his homeland, where she could have no social position at all, seems illogical even to the reader, who can understand the impossibility of Eliduc's marrying her, but cannot imagine where he could place her, once he brings her on his lands. From the point of view of the Christian culture, such an adventure can only be both sinful and socially ruinous.

Envers ses bons veisins amor. (61-66)

[The villain says that only a dunce would quarrel with his cart horse. The love of one's lord is not faithful or rather truthful (i.e. a certainty) and it is a wise person the one who feels loyalty to his liege lord, but towards his neighbors feels love].[8]

Eliduc's comments spring from his awareness of the repository of wisdom to be found in the folklore and the medieval reader was probably familiar with and understood these proverbs. Yet, although he talks about loving his good neighbors and relying on them, he chooses to leave his familiar environment and to go into a land where he is unknown. Although this foreign kingdom gives him the opportunity to prove himself,[9] and to show how mistaken those who slandered him to his liege lord were, it also proves to be a realm of temptation, where his wisdom and experience are not enough to safeguard his inner equilibrium.

His valor makes him a great knight, while his good advice elevates him to the position of a treasured leader, i.e. a person the king admired and needed. It is this respected social position and unquestionable loyalty from his followers that he loses once he carries away the foreign, innocent and naïve princess. His actions are questioned by at least one of his men and he does not seem to care about his people's welfare or opinion.

On the other hand, as I have stated before, his honest and total grief acts as repentance and brings him closer to God and when he is in need of spiritual advice, he searches the wisdom of the elders in his homeland. The first person he wants to ask for advice is the hermit (*un seinz hermits*), who lives close to his manor. To find out that he died only eight days before their arrival is another blow and he is confused, not being able to make a decision. This indecisiveness, which was his plague ever since he met the young princess, can only be cured when he takes the advice of the wise men of that country (*la sage gent del pais*). Such a discourse is an obvious attempt to return to the acknowledged tradition, i.e. cultural memory of the land, since it is the only one that can provide a basis to help him regain the balance, both spiritual and social, lost because of his deceptions and transgressions.

It only remains to identify the cultural memory that he depends on for his spiritual restoration. The reference to the saint hermit has definitely a Christian resonance and it is completed with the suggestion to consult the elders, i.e the repositories of profound popular knowledge. It is the same knowledge that was the source of the proverbs I have mentioned above. The cultural memory that defines him and that he needs in order to take decisions and thus to assert himself (i.e. his very identity) is this delicate combination of Christianity and popular wisdom recorded in proverbs and repeated by the wise elders of the country.

[8] In other words, the vassals are like the horses that move the lord's chariot and it is not a wise man the person who dismissed his vassals (his cart horses, while he is in the cart), as naturally he won't be able to move forward, which will eventually happen to Eliduc's liege lord, as it is known. Equally, since the lord's favor is not a certainty, it is better to be at peace with one's neighbors and to feel more bound in your affections to one's equals than to his superiors.

[9] When he arrives, he shares his knowledge, both military and spiritual, with his fellow knights, whom he instructs and organizes and tells them to be bold, because only those who dare and risk will win and gain great glory. He quotes again a proverb in order to give authority to his words:

Ki en tel liu ne va suvent,
U il guide perdre ascient;
U jà guères ne gainera,
Ne en grant pris ne muntera (Eliduc 187-190).
He, who does not often go in such a place where he expects to lose, will not win any wars, nor will he gain any great prize.

Spiritual Progress—Multiple Endings and the Triumph of Christian Cultural Precepts

In this last part, I want to identify who, in this *lai*, is the keeper of this fragile, but harmonious, mixture of Christianity, popular wisdom and knowledge about nature (which also implies the miraculous—I will not call it super-natural—insight). This blend represents, as I have shown, the basis for cultural memory and it is the foundation on which Eliduc defines his inner self. Moreover, it is an identity shared by his followers (maybe with the exception of Guillardun, the naïve and young foreigner).

Eliduc has been a deceiver and a liar by omission, a potential adulterer and a murderer, so he becomes more and more buried in sins, which obviously makes him incapable of dipping into such a sacred treasure, which is also prohibited to Guillardun, the naïve, unknowledgeable foreigner. On the other hand Guildeluec, the one who has remained at home, who has always been constant and reliable, proves to be a far more spiritually powerful character than her wandering husband. Guildeluec has been unchangeable in her affections and unchallenged in her social position as the matron of her lands.

She is described as being noble and wise, of high parentage and good lineage ("noble è sage,/ De haut gent è de grand parage," *Eliduc* 19-20). Furthermore, when Eliduc leaves, she is the one who is left in charge of the affairs of his land, while the knights are asked to guard her loyally ("Sa Femme en la tere l'arra/ A ses hummes cumandera, Qu'il la gardoet leaument," *Eliduc* 71-73). Guildeluec is the epitome of the faithful, wise wife who is the preserver of traditions and the one who propagates cultural memory. The ultimate test she is faced with is to solve the problems in her marriage and to bring happiness into her family, which seemed doomed to sorrow and gloom.

The first thing she does, once she sees the lifeless young lady, who is the cause of her husband's wretchedness, is to observe patiently in order to understand the circumstances better. The beauty and the freshness of the woman lying as if she were dead is the first detail that she remarks, and the unusual behavior of the weasel is another detail that does not remain unnoticed by the wise matriarch. As expected by a woman knowledgeable in the mysteries of nature, Guildeluec copies the gestures made by the faithful weasel and succeeds in awakening Guillardun, only to be faced with the duty to console her (thus saving her from hopelessness and despair) by talking about the genuineness of Eliduc's devotion to her.

At this stage, the reader has already found out two possible endings for the *lai*. First, since Guillardun is supposed to be dead, Eliduc has the possibility to come back to his wife, whom he has nothing to reproach, and whom nobody accused of any misprision (neglect of duty) or misdeed ("Dame, ne vus aret de mesprisiun, ne de meffet," *Eliduc* 727-728). Yet, Eliduc refuses and declares that he would rather become a monk, which seems another possible ending, the second. Such a dénouement would be entirely coherent with the Christian tradition, as it is a way in which Eliduc could repent for his sins in solitude.

Nevertheless, such an ending would discard the pre-Christian practical tradition exemplified by proverbs and the knowledge of nature. As no marvelous event occurred, the reader would only see an ordinary story of a proud knight who tried to replace his older, and not so beautiful wife[10] with a younger, more beautiful woman, a knight who got straightforwardly punished by God, for his transgression. In other words, Marie would have written a moral, but not quite so entertaining, story.

Reviving Guillardun gave Eliduc's wife the chance to show her wisdom, her kindness, and also her generosity. Guildeluec is not jealous, vindictive (like Iseult aux mains blanches) or suicidal (like Dido, Enea's lover), but rather she is unusually compassionate and understanding. Moreover, she is not passive or indecisive, so she takes charge and finds the solution which was not only beneficial for all, but also profoundly Christian.

[10] Guildeluec's features do not include beauty and no reference to her being beautiful appears. Furthermore, since she and her husband have lived together for a long time and they have loved each other a lot ("Ensemble furent lunguement;/Mut s'entreamèrent léaument," *Eliduc* 21-22), it is to be understood that she was rather old, and definitely older than young, still unmarried, Guillardun, whose beauty was renowned.

Instead of mourning her lost love, which could never be hers again, Guildeluec decides to take the veil, demanding that her husband endows the nunnery where she will be abbess. Thus, she preserves her high social position (as high birth nuns had all the privileges that came with aristocratic prestige and money) and she also preserves her dignity intact, as she cannot be regarded as a discarded wife, but as a pious and respected abbess.[11] Guildeluec is the one who takes the decisions and who is the only strong character who does not commit transgressions, but rather uses her influence to help the other characters to make amends.

Unlike Guillardun, who is always passive and lets Eliduc act on her behalf, and who wakes up rather desperate and alone, Guildeluec is never to be pitied, as she is wise enough to find the best possible solution, both for her and for the others. The superiority of Guildeluec's choice is reinforced by the fact that both Eliduc and Gillardun make the same decision in due time. Additionally, once Guillardun becomes a nun (at the end of the *lai*), she is placed under Guildeluec's authority, thus never having had the freedom to act for herself.

The lovers' gesture seems to show an example of a couple who start by loving each other, only to realize that their love for God is deeper and more durable. When the audience listens to Guillardun complaining about the fact that she was lied to and that a man's love should not be trusted, they may realize that it should actually be Guildeluec to shout her disappointment. However, her decision shows that the true happy ending is an "abandonment of the world and a turn to spiritual life" (Kinoshita 90).

> Mut se pena chascun pur sei,
> De Deu amer par bele fei,
> E mut par firent tuz bele fin.
> La merci Deu, le veir devin.

[Each one made a great private effort to love God in good faith and their end was very beautiful: God's mercy, divine truth].

Since the choice to dedicate their lives to God is common to many hagiographical stories, one can make a connection between Marie's story and the tradition of hagiography, which is another example of elements of Christian cultural memory, which surface when such an analysis is made. This aspect points once again to the importance of Guildeluec, as the one who has led a saintly life, and who inspires piety in others. It has been observed that "Eliduc's final deeds—endowing and founding two monasteries—not only contrast with his earlier violent, even bullying behavior, but they also demonstrate a newly gained power and a capability previously lacking in him" (Prior 134). In other words, Eliduc emerges in the end as a repentant sinner, who is spiritually improved.

After discussing the matter of the significance of cultural memory in *Eliduc*, one realizes that the character who knows and uses cultural memory is Guildeluec, additionally she is the strongest and most reliable person. She teaches the others and she gives an example which is followed by all the major characters. The role played by Guildeluec, as the person who has assimilated cultural memory, reveals her importance in society and brings to light new meanings of the *lai* which could be perceived as a promoter of Christian tradition. These conclusions prove the relevance of discussing the issue of cultural memory in connection with this *lai*.

[11] According to Milis: "Founding and entering monasteries was […] an expression of an upper class status" and also testified to a moral superiority because "of the presupposed superior quality of this life-style" (*Angelic Monks and Earthly Men* 44).

Conclusions

For Marie de France the cultural background is profoundly Christian and this knowledge is so deeply embedded into the fabric of the *lais* (*Eliduc* being as good an example as any), that it becomes essential to its internal plot and provides the suitable dénouement for her story. The cultural memory, placed at the very structure of her *lais*, is Christian, and it is supported by the popular sayings and proverbs, which are known by the "wise men of the land."

Nevertheless, there is a substrate which is older, i.e. a reminiscence of the pre-Christian natural knowledge about herbs and animals or perhaps a magic, deeply (and not super) natural knowledge, which seems to be of Celtic origin. What is important to point out is that this deeply-natural insight does not offer a solution or a resolution for the predicament. But rather, it is the Christian cultural memory, portrayed in the monastic tradition, which provides the answer for the crisis.

Discussing the issue of cultural memory in this *lai* is relevant, as the scholar can identify the source of Guildeluec's superiority, namely her position of guardian of cultural memory. The elements of the cultural memory: the Christian principles, the Celtic heritage and the popular knowledge work harmoniously to bring about the spiritual progress of all the characters.

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Ambiguity of Origins and Archive as Prosthetic Memory: An Analysis of Thomas Hardy's "A Tragedy of Two Ambitions"

Abstract: The article is an analysis of Hardy's short story "A Tragedy of Two Ambitions," in which a discourse on archive and memory is produced. The story is analyzed in terms of some commonalities between Derrida's conception of archive in *Archive Fever* and Freud's idea of totem in *Totem and Taboo*. Both critics highlight the ambiguity associated with the idea of origin and deal with the production of archive as an ongoing process, rather than a static relation with a supposedly original and monumental past. The story not only shows an ambiguous father figure, but also displays how his death is repressed and reproduced by means of a prosthetic archive. The analysis contributes to the literature produced on Hardy and comes up with slightly different results than some scholars who previously dealt with Hardy's novels. For instance, this story does not conform to a binary opposition between a reliable mother figure and an impotent father figure; on the contrary, the story disposes of such binaries and displays a prosthetic archive that emerges from the ambiguity of mother and father figures. Additionally, the story does not focus on the distinction between memory and archive. On the contrary, it implies the impossibility of a "pure memory."

Keywords: Father, archive, memory, archiviolithic, prosthesis.

Introduction

The story "A Tragedy of Two Ambitions" from Hardy's collection *Life's Little Ironies* can be analyzed in terms of the Derridean archive, as a prosthetic supplement (a material form) to the repressed. In addition to replacing the memory of the repressed with an object, the story builds a relationship between the repressed and the idea of the loss of the father. The story revolves around the theme of fatherhood, its relation to the repressed memory and the archive. In this respect, the story displays what Freud describes in *Totem and Taboo*. In this book, Freud relates his observations about the father complexes of children and neurotic patients and argues that the taboo reveals ambivalent feelings towards a person on whom the taboo is concentrated, such as a king, priest, chief or father. What initiates the taboo could be admiration, hatred, or both, one replacing the other as described by Freud:

> They hated their father, who presented such a formidable obstacle to their craving for power and their sexual desires; but they loved and admired him, too. After they got rid of him, had satisfied their hatred and had put into effect their wish to identify themselves with him, the affection which had all this time been pushed under was bound to make itself felt. It did so in the form of remorse. A sense of guilt made its appearance, which in this instance coincided with the remorse felt by the whole group. (Freud 166)

Rather than crimes that have already been committed, this story focuses more on the idea of the taboo act as uncommitted, but intended. The archive in this story is a monument that implies an ambiguity concerning the wish to commit the taboo act, such as parricide, and the remorse felt for having wished it. In other words, the archive is a monument that does not offer a truthful representation of what really happened in the past, but signifies particular moments in which there has been a repressed wish to commit the taboo act. The act is postponed, deferred or repressed.

Analysis

"A Tragedy of Two Ambitions" is an episodic story. In this story, two brothers, Cornelius and Joshua, whose mother had died and who were left to the care of a father depicted as a drunkard tramp, are initially shown in their devoted reading of the Bible. The sole goal of each child is to have a clerical career. As suggested by the story, this clerical career was also the path drawn for them by the deceased mother, who left a certain amount of money to be spared for the education of her children. The money, however, is wasted by the drunkard father, who is drawn as an obstacle to the career plans of his sons.

In the second episode, there has been a lapse of nearly ten years and the children, now grown up to be a school teacher and a clergyman, are more than ambitious to have their sister Rosa marry a wealthy squire as his second wife. However, the father, who is in an illegitimate relationship with a Gipsy woman, and who is often drunk, is an obstacle not only to their clerical careers, but also to the marriage of their sister. They want to keep him away from Narrobourne, the town where they live, by sending him and the Gipsy to Canada. However, the father, having been deserted by the Gipsy woman, wishes to return, especially after learning that his daughter is going to marry a wealthy and respectable man. In order to prevent the father from approaching the town and disgracing them before the long-expected marriage, the brothers try to catch up with him on the way to Narrabourne. They keep track of him and find him close to the town. They try to prevent him from ruining the marriage. However, they cannot restrain the father from his wish to "to take [his] place in the family" (Hardy 68). They also learn that he was not married to their mother before they were born.

While the father is going on his way in spite of the brothers' attempts, they lose sight of him and realize that he has fallen into the river. At first, Cornelius makes an attempt to help him get out of the water, but then they intentionally fail to help him and the father drowns. The brothers, feeling desperate due to the "sin" they have committed, decide not to inform other people about the death. The marriage of the sister and the squire takes place and Rosa gives birth to a son. After some months, the corpse of the father is found in an unrecognizable condition. The identity of the corpse is not revealed. On his return from the christening of his sister's baby, Joshua, joined afterwards by Cornelius, notices a silver-poplar grown out of the father's walking stick, by the river where his father had drowned. The story comes to a resolution with the brothers' dialogue of repentance and a pronouncement of their wish to finish their life on the very spot where the silver-poplar grows.

In the story, the commemorative function of the archive, which is associated with the poplar tree that grows at the place where the father drowned, does not depend on the repetition of an event that really happened, but rather on the repetition of a wish that is never fulfilled. The archive does not replace what really happened, but it is produced in place of what is delayed (the brothers' wish to commit parricide). Therefore, the archive or the monument in this case, is commemorative of a potential, of a future that has not taken place, or of a possibility that is threatening. The archived body of the dead father, symbolized as the tree, works as a trace that repeats the repressed wish.

Gilmartin and Mengham, in their analysis of Hardy's shorter fiction, describe the story "A Tragedy of Two Ambitions" as "haunted by the idea of the burden of the past" (106). The poplar tree is not only indicative of the burden of the past, but also of the brothers' parricide. Similarly, Gayla R. Steel in her study of Hardy's short stories, interprets the poplar tree as a legendary symbol of enduring guilt which "is constantly finding them out by reminding them of their deed" (85). The monument is an external manifestation; the object is ensouled with the possibility of what would happen in the future, like an arm that keeps on withering, or like a poplar tree that keeps on growing. Thus, the prosthesis established in place of the deferred wish or repentance, as may be described in "A Tragedy of Two Ambitions," keeps on growing and changing.

The temporal setting of the story encompasses a present, the moment in which the brothers are shown reading and studying, a past about which the narrator reveals hints of a deceased mother from

whom the sons and the sister would have inherited some money, which she had intended to be shared between the brothers for their educational expenses. In this case, the story initially draws a connection between the past and the future. The mother's memory (both a literal legacy, which means the money left by the mother, and a figurative legacy, signifying the mother's wish and command) has the function of ordering the future in the Derridean sense, since it orders the brothers to strive for an education and career as clergymen. The mother's legacy (wish in the figurative sense), as the commandment, commences the future; it prepares a projected future for the brothers. The memory of the mother is shown in association with the brothers' reading of the Bible, which is another archive. In other words, the mother commands obedience, and the mother's memory and the will she left are cherished by the brothers for the care and precision they are prepared with. That is, the money and the command of the mother as archive are not only obedient to the original cause (the reason of the mother's legacy, which is to make the brothers clergymen), but they also order and command obedience, which is the reading of the "New Testament" and "The Epistle to the Hebrews." The mother's will and her memory as archives demand loyalty to an original cause and faithfulness to the ritual, as well as to a system of clerical order and hierarchy. The brothers are described as followers of the religious doctrine and admirers of their mother in the following way: "They were plodding away at the Greek Testament, immersed in a chapter of the idiomatic and difficult Epistle to the Hebrews. …'How well she had estimated the sum necessary! Four hundred and fifty each, she [the mother] thought. And I have no doubt that we could have done it on that with care'" (Hardy 53-54).

However, the story dispenses with this point of origination after defining a matriarchal archive. In the story, the deceased mother's intentions and legacy are represented by the boys and the narrator. In other words, the "truthfulness" of this legacy is based on the assumption of the brothers, which is an indication of a mystery associated with the original intention of an archive. The fact that the mother is dead makes the issue of legacy a matter of speculation in the story. The source of the archive or the mother's legacy is indefinite and unknown, since the mother has already been dead and the brothers never receive the money left by the mother. This is an indication consistent with how Derrida theorizes the concept of archive. The command is supposed to come from a non-present mother figure. The reader understands later in the story that the brothers' memory of the mother is based on an assumed legitimacy rather than a real one. The brothers are disturbed when the father verifies the speculation that their mother and father were not married: "Joshua had for many years before heard whispers that his father cajoled his mother in their early years and had made somewhat tardy amends; but never from his father's lips" (Hardy 68-69).

Thus, the brothers' endeavor to protect the mother's legacy and adopt its supposed command as a future prospect is also a matter of legitimizing what is illegitimate. The brothers are trying to legitimize and commemorate the past by being loyal to its assumed command. The story questions the matriarchal origin it defines at the beginning. Since the mother's archive refers to an order and also plays its initiative function in the story, the idea of an archive in connection with the mother displays Derrida's description of archive based on two principles at the beginning of *Archive Fever*:

> This name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to nature or history, there where things commence—physical, historical, or ontological principle—but also the principle according to the law, there where men and gods command, where authority, social order are exercised, in this place from which order is given—nomological principle. (1)

The command represented by the mother also suggests the place (the setting) in which the archive is initiated, since the archival technique depends on a place for the nomological principle to be fulfilled. The nomological principle, in Derridean terms, defines the archive as a set of rules and laws. The command and law associated with the archive come from a place of origin. The originating principle is also the

principle of the commandment. The "commencement," or the origin, is also associated with the principle of the commandment. *"Archē"* names at once commencement and commandment. The place, the house and the mother figure then represent the reenactment of the law and social order. The mother then represents erudition, thesis, *technē* and *nomos* in Derrida's words. While following the mother's figurative command, the boys are described as they sit at home and study the Bible: "They were sitting in a bedroom of the master-millwright's house, engaged in the untutored of Greek and Latin" (Hardy 53). Thus, adherence to order also suggests being settled, since both brothers dedicate their life to being settled within clerical orders, by finding a position for themselves as clergymen and help their sister get settled through a marriage with a figure of authority. The mother then represents a place of origination and the brothers' wish to find that origin. Derrida, after dealing with this compulsive search for archive or an archaic origin, defines this quest as an "anarchive" at the same time, which means that this place of origination constantly "slips away" (91). That is, the origin is unattainable and this search for the archive generates the archive by negating and deferring the idea of an archival origin. Similarly, the brothers, in their endeavor to obey the religious order represented by the mother, fail in their commitment, by letting the father drown. Derrida defines this archival desire in terms of the return to origins, and such a quest for origins explains the representation of the mother figure as an archival desire in this story. "It is to have a compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire for the archive, an irrepressible desire to return to the origin, a homesickness, a nostalgia for the return of the most archaic place of absolute commencement" (Derrida, *AF* 91).

Although the story seems to represent the father figure as a counter-force against the mother and the archival tendencies of the brothers, this binary opposition between what the father and the mother represent dissipates at a deeper level. Since the brothers, by their inability to follow the course driven by their mother, which is a situation associated with archive as an origin, do not fail to follow the order of the archive. By letting the father drown, they make an archive of their disloyalty to their mother. After the death of the father, they mourn for him, and the poplar tree turns him into an archive, and they wish to kill themselves at the place where the father is drowned. In other words, they make an archive of their disloyalty, by turning the father into a monument and ritualizing the event. Thus, the mother figure, as a tendency to find the origins and create an archive, is not a counter-figure to the father represented as an archiviolithic[12] force, since both the archival and archiviolithic tendencies refer to the same procedure of archive-making. This archive-making process is depicted in the story as follows: at the beginning, the mother's archive and her legacy seem to be threatened by the presence of the father, who is depicted as a drunken failure against the settled order of the brothers. The father's presence is shown as the explicit cause of the loss of the mother's money in the story: "But she had died a year or two before this time, worn out by too keen a strain towards these ends; and the money, coming unreservedly into the hands of their father, had been nearly dissipated. With its exhaustion went all opportunity and hope of a university degree for the sons" (Hardy 54).

The father is always represented as outside the house and as a force threatening the order inside: "'He's in the straw shed. I got him [the father] with some trouble, and he has fallen asleep. I thought this would be the explanation of his absence!'" (Hardy 54). Joshua, one of the brothers, watches him as he approaches: "He saw walking slowly across it a man in a fustian coat and a battered white hat with a much-ruffled nap, having upon his arm a tall gypsy woman wearing long brass earrings" (Hardy 58). The father

[12] The term "archiviolithic" refers to a tendency to annihilate archive. It seems to be a contrary process to archive making, but Derrida defines it as a part of an archive-making process in which an archive is forgotten and repressed consciously or unconsciously. The archiviolithic drive means the annihilation of memory, but at the same time the construction of the traces of the erased memory. The repressed archive or the process of annihilating it helps its recreation in the future, since the state of being forgotten does not mean a complete erasure, as Derrida explains in *Archive Fever.*

is not only illustrated in contrast with the archive left by the mother, but also as a figure that is against institutions.

> The pair [the father and the gypsy woman] met the dignitary, and to Joshua's horror his father turned and addressed the sub-dean. What passed between them he could not tell. But as he stood in a cold sweat he saw his father place his hand familiarly on the sub-deans shoulder; the shrinking response of the latter, and his quick withdrawal, told his feeling (Hardy 59). […] [The father speaking to Joshua after he met the dean] 'Thank you for nothing. By the bye, who was that spindle-legged, shoe-buckled parson feller we met by now? He seemed to think we should poison him' (Hardy 60).

The ostensible opposition between the mother as an archive or the mother as the "archontic specter" that protects her own legacy and the father as an archiviolithic figure who is a threat to the legacy protected by the mother is removed. That is, the position of the mother seems to conform to the idea of non-origin in Derridean terms. In *Of Grammatology*, Derrida questions the status of "origin" in logocentric tradition: "Where and how does it begin…? A question of origin. But a meditation upon the trace should undoubtedly teach us that there is no origin, that is to say simple origin: that the questions of origin carry with them a metaphysical presence" (Derrida 74). This binary opposition between the father and the mother is not kept as a stable, unchanging unit throughout the story. The father, after being drowned, becomes the archive; a living organism that is archived as settled, as opposed to his previous archiviolithic and mobile position. Two brothers, Cornelius and Joshua, let the father drown when he falls into the river. Joshua is the active party in the complicity. He keeps his brother, Cornelius, from helping the drowning father and they both fail to take action in the end. The scene is described thus:

> Joshua, awaking from the stupefied reverie into which he had sunk, rushed to the other's side before he had taken ten steps. 'Stop, stop what are you thinking of?' he whispered hoarsely, grasping Cornelius's arm.
> 'Yes, yes—so am I. But—wait a moment—'
> 'But, Joshua!'
> 'Her life and happiness, you know—Cornelius—and your reputation and mine—and our chance of rising together, all three—He clutched his brother's arm to the bone; and as they stood breathless the splashing and floundering continued (Hardy 69).

The brothers let the thing they have repressed for a long time happen. They get rid of the father, whom they see as a figure that is against the past (the mother as the archive) and that threatens their future career (church). However, after the death of the father, his walking stick, which has turned into a poplar tree, becomes a living archive that inscribes their deviation from the Bible. It is the archive that recalls the assignation of that rupture. The archive as the poplar tree in the story commemorates and unifies two elements: the tree commemorates the intended parricide of the brothers and it, at the same time, commemorates a deviation from religious principles, which is the mother's command. That is, the father's walking stick, which afterwards becomes the poplar tree, refers to two contradictory elements by commemorating both the father's death (getting rid of the archiviolithic principle, which is against archive and the mother) and a deviation from religion, which is associated with the command of the mother. The poplar tree is an archive which conforms to the principle of consignation: a gathering together of signs, since it commemorates getting rid of both the archiviolithic and the archontic principle. Derrida describes it in the following way:

> This archontic function is not solely topo-nomological. It does not only require that the archive be deposited somewhere, on a stable substrate, and at the disposition of a legitimate hermeneutic authority. The archontic power, which also gathers the functions of unification, of identification, of classification, must be paired with what we will call consignation. (Derrida 3)

The father as the poplar tree rearchives, commemorates and initiates another ritual for the brothers. The poplar tree signifies the reading of the "Epistle to the Hebrews," which, as the editor of the collection points out, is about Aaron, who proves that he is a true priest by making his rod turn into a snake [reference to Aaron's rod is made by the editor of the collection in the end notes]. At the end of the story, Cornelius quotes from the "Epistle to the Hebrews," suggesting that the father's rod is a reminder of Aaron and suggesting also that they failed as clergymen. That is, the violence towards the father's physical presence reaffirms the father's existence in the shape of an archive, which is the reminder of the brothers' heresy and the fact that the brothers are acting contrary to the archive, which is the biblical command: "You shall not kill." The poplar tree, commemorating the death of the father, is the archive of the parricide, the sin intended. In other words, the oedipal violence inscribes the archive more fervently, since the story affirms the existence of the primary archive and transforms the father's anti-archival function into the affirmation of the Bible. The poplar tree as the archive of deviation initiates a ritual of commemoration because the brothers wish to repeat the event, the trauma, by thinking of killing themselves in the future. The death of the father and the transformation of this event into an archive lead to the repetition of the traumatic event in the past and the projection of the future. This intention is clearly shown in the following conversation:

> 'I see him every night,' Cornelius murmured… 'Ah, we read our Hebrews to little account, Jos!
> To have endured the cross, despising the shame—there lay greatness! But now I often feel that I should like to put an end to trouble here in this self-same spot.'
> 'I have thought of it myself,' said Joshua.
> 'Perhaps we shall, someday,' murmured his brother. (Hardy 73)

In this respect, the story is consistent with how Derrida deals with archontic institutions in *Archive Fever*. According to Derrida, an archive is instituted through the repetition of a trauma, which is also the repetition of something repressed. Violence and the trauma initiate the archive in the Derridean sense. Repetition, on the other hand, gives it an institutional quality; but the repetition of the archive does not have to imitate the event that is repressed. The institution of an archive might differ from the event that ostensibly initiates it. According to Derrida, the archive may not commemorate an event that took place in the past in any real sense. The archive might rely on an event that never happened. It might commemorate a repressed desire for parricide, rather than mourning for the dead father. Even though it institutes and commemorates the dead father, the tree betrays the memory of the father. It becomes the archive not because it refers to the father, but because the wish to kill is a repressed memory. While the archive as a tree impresses the event of the father's drowning, it also represses the idea that the brothers wished to kill the father, by turning the repressed wish into a symbol. In others words, in this case, the archive both inscribes and, while inscribing, it erases and represses. This is explained in *Archive Fever* as follows:

> Unlike repression (Verdrängung), which remains unconscious in its operation and in its result, suppression (Unterdrückung) effects what Freud calls a "second censorship"—between the conscious and the preconscious—or rather affects the affect, which is to say, that which can never be repressed in the unconscious but only suppressed and displaced in another affect. (28)

The dead father is instituted as a poplar tree; a reminder of the biblical command connected to the Old Testament through Aaron's rod. However, the poplar tree as an archive does not follow the pattern of the original myth. The father's death is not identical to the biblical myth, since it deviates from the idea behind Aaron's rod, which is transformed into a serpent, showing that Aaron is the true prophet. The poplar tree as an archive represents a deviation from its original purpose as well, since the father is first presented as

a figure who is opposed to Religion. The poplar tree also deviates from the biblical myth, since it is not affirmative. In the original myth, the rod has the function of showing that Aaron is the true priest. It shows what he really is. The symbol is attributed the function of revealing the truth that is not seen by others. The goal of the rod as a serpent is to show the origin. However, in this story the father's rod is not faithful to the origin. On the contrary, the rod is a sign that initiates a deviation from the physical being of the father. It initiates both the putrefaction of the father's body and a symbolic ideality of the rod that enables further ritual.

The story shows the discovery of the father's unrecognizable body and its reappearance in the shape of a poplar tree as subsequent events, the latter taking the place of the former. The body is consumed by nature, but the symbol of the rod, which signifies the brothers' repressed wish to commit crime, is produced by nature. In this respect, the symbol of the rod is much in tune with Forster's image of the book which becomes a part of the nature. Emphasis is laid on the decay and the non-identification of the body: "A day or two after there was an inquest; but the body was unrecognizable. Fish and flood had been busy with the millwright; he had no watch or marked article which could be identified, and a verdict of the accidental drowning of a person unknown settled the matter" (Hardy 71).

While the body is subject to decay, the rod symbolizing the idealized monument gains the status of archive. The poplar tree that grew out of the father's rod represents the patriarchal authority and phallus and, in its new form as the symbol of power, it is replaced with the figure of the father, who is represented earlier in the story as an anti-archive figure. In its idealized form as an archive, the rod gains authority and power and renews the idea of the father. The father as a monument is associated with power, representing a figure with whom the brothers would like to identify. The detested father of the past becomes a figure they admire after his death. This is manifested in the conversation between the brothers, in which they reveal their remorse and wish to die at the place where the father is drowned. This is also the place of commemoration where the poplar tree grew.

This brings this analysis back to an initial comment referring to Freud, in which it is argued that the father figure is the source of ambivalent feelings in neurotics and in communities of totemic religion. According to Freud, the feeling that transforms the father from a detested figure into a totemic figure to be admired stems from the feeling of remorse for having wished his death. Freud puts this guilty conscience and the idea of original sin at the root of all cultural institutions (182), and all the ensuing rituals in which the ambiguity of feeling towards the father are symbolically reenacted.

> We see, then, that in the scene of sacrifice before the god of the clan the father is in fact represented twice over—as the god and as the totemic animal victim. […] The two-fold presence of the father corresponds to the two chronologically successive meanings of the scene. The ambivalent attitude towards the father has found a plastic expression in it […] (173-174)

The story illustrates the body of the father consumed and builds a monument in its place. Such a representation displays the ambiguity of feelings towards the father figure in *Totem and Taboo.* For instance, on the one hand it is static and unchanging, and in this respect it is expected to be the idealized symbol of patriarchal authority. On the other hand, the symbol of the rod lacks the feature of universality that the ideal conforms to. The rod has a signifying and symbolic function only for the brothers. The rod signifies the intended and repressed parricide only for those who were present at the moment of the father's death. The rod reminds the brothers of their own delusive act and repeats their repressed desire of killing the father. While the rod reveals a secret to the brothers, it, at the same time, hides their secret by becoming the kind of symbol which could only be understood by the witness. The meaning of the monument is not publicized. The symbolism associated with the rod keeps the wish to kill a secret. In this respect, the monument is like writing, since it is symbolic and not immediate. The rod is the kind of archive which commands the brothers that they should not forget. That is, the monument repeats and, in its

repetition of the event, it introduces ideality by symbolizing the father. On the other hand, this ideality is not completely divorced from empirical reality, since through this ideality the commemorated event is differentiated. The rod does not commemorate the death of the father, but the brothers' desire to kill the father. Therefore, the story reenacts Derrida's description of archival techniques, by illustrating the corpse as the representative of a memory rupture, and builds a monument in its place. In this respect, the corpse, by being devastated and made unidentifiable by natural forces, erases the original intention, which is the intended parricide, but by erasing the original intention it recreates the archive (the rod) as the affirmation of patriarchal authority, and offers a way of redemption.

Conclusions

In her article "Written in Stone: Hardy's Grotesque Sublime," Marjorie Garson deals with Hardy's treatment of stones and what meanings the stones carry in his novels and some of his short stories. When considered in terms of this analysis, Hardy's treatment of stones includes some suggestions concerning his attitude towards archive and writing. Garson argues that Hardy's treatment of stones has much in common with what Derrida calls a "logocentric desire" for presence and authenticity, and he is "supposedly inhering in the voice as opposed to the written word" (97). While Garson sees a direct contrast between Derrida and Hardy, this analysis claims that this supposed contrast between Hardy and Derrida's notion of writing and archive may not be such a distinctive feature of his short stories, such as the story analyzed above. As opposed to a quest for origins and a condemnation of writing and archive as artificial to the natural, Hardy's imagery negates the idea of such an origination. On the contrary, Hardy manifests a conviction that this supposed presence behind archives and textuality is the confirmation of a ritual of redemption that stems from the ambiguity of origins. For instance, the father in this story is representative of an archivioltihic desire to annihilate all the archive associated with the Bible and its institution, but on the other hand the father also represents an institutional quality, since he is transformed into a commemorative archive that is generated through the brothers' deviation from the order of Christianity. In this respect, the father is both archival and archiviolithic. In other words, the strength of the father's institutional quality does not stem from his integrity as a paternal figure. Conversely, the father's institutional quality and his archival strength derive from his ambiguity and unreliability as father. The mother figure seems to be omnipotent, but this point of origination is ambiguous where this story is concerned, since the mother does not exist and she comes to represent illegitimacy, the very opposite of what the brothers believe. Garson also argues that in *The Well-Beloved*, Hardy "focuses on three women, offers splitting, fragmentation, and replication, the physical setting, personified as male, speaks of bodily integrity, coming-together" (105). This judgment may not be generalized into all Hardy's stories where father figures are also represented as unreliable, ambiguous and a split within the family, as this story and many other stories by Hardy, such as "The Fiddler of the Reels" and "For Conscience' Sake," manifest.

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Eugene O'Neill's Romanian Memory Revisited through Petru Comarnescu's Diary and Corespondence

Abstract: My paper investigates the records of an exemplary transatlantic connection discontinued by the historical break in Romanian-American relations that occurred after the second World War and the onset of Communism in Eastern Europe. I will look closely at samples of intellectual affinity between the artistic vision of American playwright Eugene O'Neill and the viewpoints expressed by his Romanian critical supporter Petru Comarnescu. Caught in the net of memory, the two cultural personalities sustain each other as well as the values of their respective cultural spaces, their connection being also an instance of cultural agency on behalf of the Romanian side: thus, consolidating the canonic position of Eugene O'Neill as an American playwright led to the inclusion of Petru Comarnescu in the Romanian and international critical canon. As primary sources, I will be using extracts from Comarenscu's diary and the letters he exchanged with O'Neill during the 1930s and 1940s. Given that O'Neill's cultural memory in Romania is at present on the wane, a revival of interest in this respect would be more than welcome.

Keywords: intellectual affinities, historical imagination, memory, cultural agency, transatlantic connections.

Motto: "When thinking about memory we must start with forgetting" (Assman 97).

Introduction

In the case of canonical cultural items, the framework of communication works with messages that have a cultic status and which, as forms of active memory, are continually remembered, while the archives merely contain traces—passively stored memories and historical curiosities that are situated between active memory and forgetting and are open to interpretation and creative (re)readings. As Aleida Assman's study suggests, forgetting is part of the "social normality." My paper deals with several such traces detected in certain archives and means to prove that remembering is justified in the particular case addressed for this purpose. While the state archives constitute important tools for political power, the historical archives may be empowering for the cultural field. As Assman explains, the obsession with archives emerged initially after the French Revolution and was generated by a violent break with the national past—they are a form of reference memory constituting a rich background for the working memory. Also, they may be subversive and lead to a reshuffling of the canon. Therefore, an independent reference to the past can trigger a counter-history or bring to light a lost story.

At the center of my investigation, Eugene O'Neill appears as a connection-seeking artist, whose friendship with American and foreign critics contributed to elevating his literary status and who was extremely interested in seeing his plays staged and understood around the world. Engaged in transatlantic dialogue with the playwright, Petru Comarnescu emerged as an innovative researcher and astute critic thwarted from his task (upon which he had embarked in all earnestness) only by the adverse course of history, while the reception of O'Neill as a playwright in Romania was similarly impaired by the onset of Communism. In the following pages, I will investigate how Comarnescu found solace and inspiration in O'Neill's works and reveal what original contributions he brought to reading the American author's plays. Initiated in 1937, their dialogue continued optimistically into the next decade, despite the fact that the late 1940s found both the artist and the critic severely tried by personal and political circumstances with

which they struggled as best they could. As primary sources for my paper, I will look at Comarenscu's persoanl diary, his exchange of letters with the American playwright and also briefly investigate several samples of Comarnescu's criticism, which are indicative of the admiration and comprehension the Romanian critic had for O'Neill's artistic persona.

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A survey of Comarnescu's critical preoccupation with O'Neillean drama reveals a remarkable capacity for outlining O'Neill's fundamental ideas, of integrating them into the sphere of universal culture and of tracing their evolution along the various stages of O'Neill's work—with the ultimate purpose of upholding Comarnescu's central claim, namely, that America's foremost playwright was the re-creator of tragedy in the 20th century, in keeping with the Nobel Prize Committee's reason for bestowing the prize on O'Neill in 1936. From his two studies of 1937 and up to the posthumous publication of *O'Neill şi Renaşterea tragediei* [*O'Neill and the Revival of Tragedy*] (1986), Petru Comarnescu was O'Neill's foremost Romanian promoter. In his Introduction to *Introducere la Teatrul American Contemporan* [*Contemporary American Theatre*] (1967), Comarnescu discusses American drama from O'Neill to Albee, showing how several features of this art form originate with O'Neill's unique contribution. He calls Eugene O'Neill "the strongest and most original personality of the American theatre" to that date, from the whole group of ten dramatists seen as "creators with an elevated human conscience... who took turns in answering the call of the socio-historical phenomena in their homeland and in the world, took part in the transformations of reality, and tried to find answers to the big questions of the individual and of humankind from the last half of the century" (Comarnescu, "Aprecieri…" 5, my transl).

Comarnescu specifies that, due to their contribution, American dramatic literature is no longer dependent upon European drama, but becomes both a national and a universal reality. The Romanian critic affirms that, until O'Neill's emergence as a significant dramatic figure, one couldn't speak of an ample and profoundly original dramatic literature on the American stage, a fact that all histories of the American theater openly acknowledge. And even if American drama was late in coming of age, due to O'Neill it largely recuperated this delay:

> With his creative force and his wide grasp, Eugene O'Neill thoroughly researched the American way of life, he created characters from the American history and its present, he analyzed situations and conflicts proper to the different social categories, different formulas and ideals of life, and he promoted the most varied and relevant staging techniques. (Comarnescu, "Aprecieri…" 8, my transl).

A careful reading of Petru Comarnescu's personal musings reveals that his intellectual frame of mind shared certain features with Eugene O'Neill's artistic vision, and I believe it was these "elective affinities" that contributed to their mutual appreciation and collaboration. Early on in his diary, Comarnescu expresses a vision of life which denotes an affinity with O'Neill's life view and sets the ground for their future understanding and correspondence. It seems that both intellectuals had a preference for the ancient Greek culture, whom they admired and by which they were obviously inspired in their work. One of its central features, the Dionysian display of vitality, was integral to their frame of mind: "I need great love and great hatred, which should either put me down or lift me upwards" (Comarnescu, *Jurnal* 1: 21, my transl.). Equally interesting, both intellectuals displayed the same tendency to pour their life into their works, with the only difference that with Comarnescu this action was left at the level of intentions, a tendency whose expression was probably influenced by echoes from O'Neill's artistic vision: "I would like to pour all the feelings, problems and contradictions of the last year and a half into my writing. I feel I could write a trilogy of great feelings: love, motherly love, friendship…" (Comarnescu, *Jurnal* 1: 127, my transl.). It must be added that the Romanian critic dedicated himself to translating O'Neill's *Strange*

Interlude at a most difficult time in his life—the divorce from his wife, Gina. In these bleak moments, his choice of losing himself into his work resembles the effort and concentration of O'Neill's painstaking process of writing his masterpiece, *Long Day's Journey into Night*: "In these terrible times for me, so as not to go mad, I translated at the most difficult moments O'Neill's *The Strange Interlude*, in which I found so many situations similar to those I was going through, although infinitely less infamous, and yet with similar complications" (Comarnescu, *Jurnal* 1: 154, my translation).

Like the American playwright, similarly given to understanding the diversity of the world through traveling, the Romanian critic notes that his life was marked by a "dualism of joys and sorrows, of pleasures and ill fortune" and asserts his belief in destiny, which he identifies in one of his diary entries as "a metaphysical reason," noticing that his "existence is determined by an irrational play of contrary forces" (Comarnescu, *Jurnal* 1: 193, my transl.). At the same time, Comarnescu believed in the human personality defined by an "active and rational life, through harmony, measure, balance, tireless aspiration towards perfection" (Vasile Morar qtd. in Cristea 264, my translation). For him, the work of art was a search for goodness as the ultimate purpose in life and it is on this basis that his profound understanding of O'Neillean drama lies: "He suggests that there is a constant in individual and societal life, that requires, ultimately, for the authentic human development to be accomplished through the fusion of the moral substance with the aesthetic phenomenon" (Vasile Morar qtd. in Cristea 264, my transl).

Comarnescu was equally influenced by the ideas of American pragmatism on art and life as "experience," as "continual foray into the perfection of the objective and spiritual realities" (Vasile Morar qtd. in Cristea 264, my transl.). As a "born dialectician," with the ideal of Hellenistic perfection in mind, Comarnescu believed in "the classical fulfillment of man through his work," which implied a synthesis of thought, action and feeling (Frunzetti qtd. in Cristea 282). Given such intellectual traits, the Romanian critic had no difficulty in feeling empathy with O'Neill, himself in awe with the classical ideal of perfection, and continually glossing in his plays on the Heraclitean dualism of the world. Moreover, several fragments of Comarnescu's study of American society, *Homo Americanus*, point to his particularly nuanced understanding of Eugene O'Neill's personality as the typical American artist and intellectual, whose social function is to communicate "the understanding of reality" (Comarnescu qtd. in Bărbat 448, my transl):

> the American intellectual and artist is searching, therefore, in his own environment for possibilities of expression and progress… the period of evasion and alienation from America has ended. The metaphysical destiny of the human being occurs everywhere. It is wiser for the human being to fight the other, more relative and flexible destiny: the destiny of the environment that can be understood and changed (Comarnescu qtd. in Bărbat 448, my transl.)

The emphasis on the intellectual ability to "understand" one's destiny is reflected, in Comarnescu's view of O'Neill's dramatic universe, by the phrase "O'Neill's drama of life and awareness" that gave the title to the Romanian critic's first comprehensive article on the American playwright's work, an article which O'Neill himself read and highly appreciated. Furthermore, through his complex understanding of the American intellectual spirit, Comarnescu gained a rare insight into O'Neill's paradoxical optimism: "the American intellectual becomes, increasingly, a humanist whose trust in the human powers to ennoble oneself and the others, remains, beyond any disappointment and suffering, the sole optimistic excess that his heart can bear…" (Comarnescu qtd. in Bărbat 453).

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The Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library from the Yale University holds the drafts of four letters that the playwright sent to his Romanian correspondent, and which Petru Comarnescu included as an

annex into his critical study of O'Neill's drama, entitled *O'Neill şi Renaşterea tragediei* [*O'Neill and the Revival of Tragedy* (1986)]. These letters—two of them dating from 1938, the others from 1939 and 1945—reflect the sustained interest and mutual respect that the two intellectuals had for each other. They equally reflect O'Neill's artistic generosity and the particular interest and pleasure he was taking in seeing his plays read, staged and critically acclaimed worldwide.

Fig. 1. The old National Theater building in Bucharest where O'Neill's *Mourning Becomes Electra* was staged until the bombing raid of 1944.

The first letter (dated May 20, 1938) seems to have been the first that the playwright sent to Comarnescu, and it is most relevant for their relationship that O'Neill was already acquainted with Comarnescu's interest in his work since he had read the latter's article reprinted in *Revue Hebdomadaire*. In the letter, O'Neill praises the article as "a fine piece of critical writing" and stresses that it is "much superior to other criticism of my work," expressing his "congratulations" and "sincere appreciation" for the critic's achievement (O'Neill to Comarnescu—Letter 1). Hearing that Comarnescu had already translated *The Strange Interlude*, O'Neill authorizes him to publish it and gives up any copyright on this translation, merely asking for "a copy of the book for my library" (Letter 1). O'Neill further expresses his desire to send several materials for publication in *Revista Fundaţiilor Regale* (as Comarnescu had suggested), when his health would allow him to do further work on the projected cycle of plays and concludes the letter by an expression of "gratitude" for Comarnescu's endeavors.

In the second letter (dated November 26, 1938), O'Neill expresses his sincere appreciation for Comarnescu's sustained lobby in favor of his plays and asks the Romanian critic to write to him about the reception that *Strange Interlude* (and not only) would have in our country. He also makes Comarnescu his legal representative in Romania and mentions that he would like to receive the volumes that our critic published, with translations from his works. This letter also gives Comarnescu full rights to translate and stage *Mourning Becomes Electra*, referred to as "the best thing I have done" and about which O'Neill believes that it will have "the greatest success of all my plays in your theaters" (O'Neill to Comarnescu Letter 2). O'Neill concludes his second letter by hoping that their collaboration would equally help in Comarnescu's literary career. Such prospects were decidedly most encouraging and yet the times would prove that this bludgeoning transatlantic friendship would soon be confronted with unexpected impairment.

Despite the initial enthusiasm of the previously discussed lines, the third letter (dated March 8, 1939) already talks about the difficulties of transatlantic correspondence, with O'Neill wondering about the delay of the contract he had sent to Comarnescu, and in which he had granted the latter the right to translate

and publish *The Strange Interlude* in Romania. However, the joy of academic communication and a mutual interest in the sphere of literature makes for an alert and informative style. Besides several more casual remarks—concerning Comarnescu's state of health and O'Neill's denial that he had written an autobiography—the playwright offers Comarnescu his sustained opinion on several American critical studies on his work.

The fourth, and final, letter that Comarnescu published (dated July 12, 1945), communicates the delight of the playwright at finding out about the success of *Mourning Becomes Electra* in Bucharest. O'Neill asks his Romanian friend to send his "grateful appreciation" to the artistic team that had staged the trilogy. Regarding Comarnescu's interest in the playwright's work, O'Neill gives him full rights as a "sole representative and translator" of his other plays in Romania, thus conferring upon the Romanian critic his utmost trust and esteem. The tone of the letter is nevertheless saddened by O'Neill's acknowledgement of the destruction of our National Theater building by the German forces, as well as by the communication of his own state of health that had continually deteriorated since the beginning of the war.

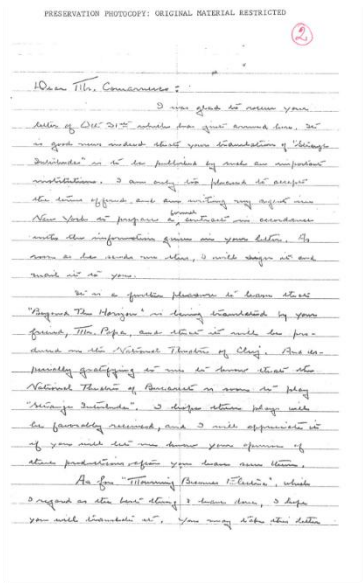
PRESERVATION PHOTOCOPY: ORIGINAL MATERIAL RESTRICTED

Fig. 2. The handwritten draft of one of O'Neill's letters to Comarnescu
from the Beinecke Archives

Besides the four letters that Comarnescu translated and published for the Romanian readers, the Beinecke Archive holds one more letter that Comarnescu sent to the playwright in August 1947, a year of great hopes and disillusionment for the Romanian critic. In this letter, addressed to O'Neill' wife, Carlotta, Comarnescu mentions sending them a Romanian volume of O'Neill's plays, entitled *Dramas of the Sea and the Land* (which contained the plays: *Anna Christie, Desire under the Elms, Beyond the Horizon*), as well as planning to send them soon another volume entitled *Dramas of the Great Love* (which included *Ah! Wilderness*—in his translation, *Welded* and *Days without End*). Always eager to point out the various cultural connections that he was mediating, Comarnescu adds that he had also translated Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World*, and that he was hoping to see *The Emperor Jones* and *Days without End* staged in Bucharest soon enough. Unfortunately, as we find out from his diary, the staging of *Playboy* would be forbidden by Zaharia Stancu in September 1947, and the same Stancu would criticize and ultimately oppose himself to the staging of the above-mentioned O'Neill plays, invoking as a reason their

author's Catholicism. Shaken by this absurd opposition, Comarnescu realizes that his study on the revival of tragedy in O'Neill's dramatic universe would remain unpublished "for who knows how long" (Comarnescu, *Jurnal* 1: 273, my transl.). Our critic further explains in his diary that tragedy itself was no longer in fashion on the Romanian stage in those times, being considered depressing and demobilizing by the Communist critics, while the notion of destiny itself had come to be regarded by censorship as a "bourgeois diversion." However, Comarnescu's struggle to uphold the cultural values he believed in did not cease, despite those difficult times. As his words prove, he believed in destiny but not in deterministic resignation. Rather, he felt that "exactly because we do not know what is our fate, we must fight, as the ancient heroes fought, confronting the obstacles, measuring themselves up with their fates" (Comarnescu, *Jurnal* 1: 279, my transl.). The reason Comarnescu thought life was still worth living in that bleak era is clearly expressed in his diary: "in this infamous world, there are nevertheless so many values, beauties, so many ideas and authentic souls that would deserve another fate" (Comarnescu, *Jurnal* 1: 274, my transl.). Therefore, in his correspondence with O'Neill, the critic doesn't give up hope, in its idealistic and pragmatic forms. After assuring Mrs. O'Neill that he would soon send the playwright the royalties collected from the staging of his plays, the critic gives details about his work on the volume regarding the revival of tragedy: "The book starts with your husband's biography and the last chapters deal with a wide analysis of the artistic traits and humanistic meanings of his work" (Comarnescu to O'Neill, Folder 303: 36). And if, in his diary of the same year, he had expressed the immodest (but nevertheless valid) conviction that he had "done more than anyone here for the knowledge of the United States" (Comarnescu, *Jurnal* 1: 290), in his letter to O'Neill, Comarnescu compares his critical endeavor to those of other critics, in the expressed hope that his study would prove to be even more insightful by comparison: "I am sure that my book will be far more complete than that of Barret Clark or as the chapters dedicated by Prof. Quinn, Levinson, Koischwitz, Lewisohn, Nathan, et cetera, to Mr. O'Neill's works" (Beinecke records, Folder 303: 36). Fortunately, the sources of Comarnescu's self-confidence in his superior understanding of O'Neill's artistic universe can and have been proven, or else one could be slightly surprised in reading the following words: "I think, without false modesty, that I am nearer to his philosophy and art than any of his critics and admirers" (Beinecke records, Folder 303: 36). But, given that his dedication to investigating O'Neill's creation had started more than a decade before, and taking into account his research period in the States and the great number of studies dedicated to American culture he wrote, not to mention the particular intellectual affinities I referred to above, one can safely state that Comarnescu "adopted" O'Neill and built around him a vision so consistent that he had come to regard it as integral to his personality as a critic.[13]

From this final letter we also learn about the existence of three photo albums from the Romanian performance of *Mourning Becomes Electra* that had been sent to the O'Neills together with Comarnescu's published translation of the trilogy. However, despite the hopeful ending referring to prospects of continuing correspondence and fruitful collaboration, both Comarnescu and O'Neill would soon find themselves overwhelmed by personal and political issues. In a diary entry from 1948, Comarnescu was expressing a profound sense of despair, whose corresponding feeling was O'Neill's deep pessimism of *The Iceman Cometh*, which the playwright was involved in staging at the time. In this entry, we find the Romanian critic mourning his fate, while relating to the artistic universe that he held so dear—the one embodied by O'Neill's (and Shakespeare's) heroes:

[13] See my paper on "Neoclassicism as Negated Alterity. Petru Comarnescu's Reading of Eugene O'Neill's Drama through the Grid of *Kalokagathon*." *The University of Bucharest Review*. ["Alterity and Identity: Geographies of the Mind" (2008)]. The paper uses Norman Holland's psychoanalytical theory of the "identity theme" to explain Comarnescu's understanding of O'Neill's dramatic universe.

> …why were we even born? A banal, cheap philosophy, and a tragic one too. Between Hamlet and Hickey, the Iceman and Luke, Ionel and me, amidst so many dialogues and debates, what is the good of all these? The ethos of the ancient tragedy—we are pitiful or, in a modern phrasing, *it would have been better never to be born*… (Comarnescu, *Jurnal* 2: 28, my translation and emphasis).[14]

Besides the empathy based on common aspirations and cultural preferences, the communion of the two kindred spirits was sustained by Comarnescu's philosophical approach to O'Neill's drama. The main line of argument in Comarnescu's doctoral dissertation, *Kalokagathon*, refers to self-accomplishment, where the aesthetic element is the dynamic and constructive side of the ethical aspect of life, the beautiful being understood as an "imaginative spirituality" (Vasile Morar qtd. in Cristea 265, my transl.); in other words, human life, as imagined, becomes integral to the achievement of the good human life. From this point onwards, the connection with the ethos of O'Neill's works can easily be traced: O'Neill's dreamers are listening to a different drummer than the one embodied by the mercantile spirit of their times, they are outcasts from a society whose dreams of pragmatic success stifle their pure aspiration towards beauty and understanding. However, their power to dream remains intact despite the existential vicissitudes they encounter and is indicative of an enduring human spirit that might, given other circumstances, be able to build a better world. Just as the correspondence and collaboration of the two intellectuals did not bear fruit in that troubled time and place, neither could O'Neill's dreamers survive or adapt themselves to a non-idealistic society. But, for them, to struggle and strive for beauty—even when caught up in the throes of misery—represented a way to uphold an ideal vision and make it linger in the hearts and minds of the community.

> At the back of O'Neill's artistic conscience, Comarnescu identifies a permanent striving for "justice, purity, for the freedom and dignity of man, and an opposition to wealth and to the sort of civilization that binds him" (*O'Neill şi Renaşterea tragediei* 42, my transl.). The critic ends his minute analysis with a remark reminding us of his conviction expressed in *Kalokaghaton* about the coexistence of the good and the beautiful in art: [O'Neill] invested his whole being into his art, he brought into it his experiences, his feelings and his visions, living to express himself through art and believing in the power of art to search for and find out the truth. He had indeed, among his great misfortunes, the happiness of artistic creation, [bringing to his spectators and readers] the bliss of art, with its meanings, enthusiasms, lights and mysteries, with its untiring striving for truth, good and beauty. (*O'Neill şi renaşterea tragediei* 43, my transl)

In his preface to Comarnescu's monumental study (*O'Neill and the Revival of Tragedy,* 1986), Dan Grigorescu underlines the obvious qualities of the critical considerations I have presented so far, to which he adds the significant observation that Comarnescu deserves all the more praise, since his investigation didn't benefit from the critical support offered by several important studies that had been published. As Grigorescu makes clear, this did not happen due to Comarnescu's reticence towards the opinion of other critics, but because his study—initiated in times of war and concluded around 1945—was "affected by the brutal interruption of the circulation of cultural ideas in that period" (Grigorescu, "Prefaţă" 10, my transl.). As a proof of Comarnescu's critical intuition, Grigorescu demonstrates how the former's opinions concur with those of other critics unknown to him at the time, thereby compensating for his lack of information. Grigorescu assures us that Comarnescu didn't have access to an interview from 1922, in which O'Neill had

[14] As the emphasized sentence from the above quotation proves, Comarnescu's diary resonates with O'Neill's introspective and pessimistic writing style—so much so as to anticipate a line from the play unknown to our critic, which would become the American playwright's masterpiece. In *Long Day's Journey into Night*, the auto-biographical character Edmund states quizzically, while deploring his miserable existence: "it was a mistake my being born a man…"

declared that he believed the human emotions were a better guide to inner truth than the thoughts, and defined these emotions as an instinctual outburst. The Romanian critic had noticed a similar distinction in O'Neill's *The Moon of the Carribbees*, where "life busts out violently as a reaction against death" (qtd. in Grigorescu, "Prefaţă" 12, my transl.). Grigorescu also underlines the elevated interpretation that Comarnescu gives to this play, an interpretation that has more to do with the sphere of moral philosophy, in which the latter had specialized: for Comarnescu, the characters that manage to break away from the exotic spell in *The Moon of the Carribbees* release human dignity from the yoke of nature and instincts.[15] Grigorescu concludes the preface by restating that it is almost certain that the Romanian critic wasn't familiar with important foreign criticism at the time when he wrote his study—and therefore his critical contribution is all the more remarkable with respect to "his capacity of defining O'Neill's fundamental ideas, of integrating them into the universal culture and tracing their evolution along the various stages of O'Neill's works" ("Preface" 21, my transl).

Conclusions

If "what is forgotten need not be lost forever" (Assman 106), one should be thankful to the librarians and archivists who appear to embody the *guardian angels of paper* (in Margaret Atwood's inspired phrasing), since they provide us with background information which can be activated in creative ways. Therefore, in concluding, I have to express my gratitude to the academic efficiency and dedication of such institutions as the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library from the Yale University, which provided me with the records of the transatlantic correspondence I have analyzed, and the Academy's Library in Bucharest. Their precious resources made possible my research which brought about an awareness that "the historical archive helps us to position ourselves in time; it affords us the possibility of comparison and reflection for a retrospective historical consciousness" (Assman 106).

I believe that such archives of cultural memory the present paper has brought to light should be periodically revisited in order to consolidate O'Neill's canonical status as a representative of American culture in Romania and to be able to secure Comarnescu's place into the Romanian and international critical canon. Ultimately, beyond all personal sorrows, Petru Comarnescu's diary and his correspondence with Eugene O'Neill back up the scholarly enterprise upon which our critic engaged wholeheartedly and convey the comfort of a communion of the spirits since, as history finally proved, neither the critic nor the playwright are remembered mainly for their pessimism and resignation—but for their tragic struggle with fate and for the supreme gift of their prodigious creativity.

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[15] This is a significant difference in opinion from O'Neill himself and represents Comarnescu's personal view.

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Culture as Profitable Memory at David Lodge

Abstract: The world of academia is perceived as a competitive milieu full of rivalry. University teaching staff in Britain find themselves in the midst of a whirlpool of ideological and conceptual trends. The effort of academics to stay tuned and to keep up with every new intellectual issue transforms universities into a fierce professional environment. David Lodge humorously analyzes the effects of this excessive professionalization on the academics' personalities and personal lives. His approach in *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (1975) and *Small World: An Academic Romance* (1984) is different from the tenser one adopted by Malcolm Bradbury in *The History Man* (1975).

Keywords: academia, rivalry, David Lodge, Britain, development

Introduction

The aim of such intellectual impetus is not personal development, but a life-long effort to get better integrated into the social system. The subtitle of the first novel, *A Tale of Two Campuses*, is an intertextual link to Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*. The opening statement of the Victorian novel testifies, unwillingly of course, to the loose morals and intellectual principles of the times. What Dickens announced as Nietzschean epistemological perspectivism, has become a sign of debilitation or, at least, complete disorientation in postmodernism:

> It was the best of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the Spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way… (Dickens 1)

A Seductive Profession for Acting Skills

In such a slippery environment, people cling to whatever offers them at least short-term certainties. During the 1970s and until the 1990s, university teaching was a profession of the stage. Students expected to be seduced on all planes by their tutors. Even the timid Philip Swallow—only possessing budding charisma until he reaches full maturity—gets involved in putting "spells" on his students. One of his "victims" reproduces such an episode in her test paper:

> Question 5. By what means did Milton try to justify the ways of God to man in *Paradise Lost*?—My tutor Professor Swallow seduced me in his office last February, if I don't pass this exam I will tell everybody. John Milton was the greatest English poet after Shakespeare. He knew many languages and nearly wrote *Paradise Lost* in Latin in which case nobody would be able to read it today. He locked the door and made me lie on the floor so nobody could see us through the window. I banged my head on the wastepaper bin. He also considered writing his epic poem about King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, which is a pity he didn't as it would have made a more exciting story. (288)

I had to reproduce the quotation in full as its implications, besides its humor, are revealing. Milton's puritanism is abruptly abolished by the academe. Neither are the intellectual guides spiritual masters. Lodge exploits the myth of King Arthur and his knights—for instance, Morris Zapp declares: "Scholars these days are like the errant knights of old, wandering the ways of the world in search of adventure and glory"

(291). "Adventure" obviously stands for "affairs." But more than an errant knight, the postmodern academic assumes the role of an actor. There is an issue of imagology here: the academic actors and actresses resort to a plethora of means in order to seduce their young auditorium—they try to keep fit, to be fashionable and updated even in terms of pop culture, to be trendy when it comes to theoretical developments, and to stay in contact with the world-wide academic milieu and with the political one, too. For example, Morris Zapp jogs even if he dislikes physical training, buys sophisticated clothes and invests in a new sports car able to transmit his sexual openness. The same Zapp fascinates Swallow's 11-year-old daughter with his knowledge of pop-music and cartoons, while he greedily absorbs the latest literary theories with the declared purpose of becoming the highest paid English professor in the world. Even the provincial Philip Swallow, once arrived in the USA, becomes caught up in the political turmoil. Above all, university lecturers need to stay in good shape in order to stand up to the demands of the academic stage. That is why the private lives of the best professionals are different from the common bourgeois families. A discussion between the former erotic rivals in *Changing Places,* but on friendly terms in *Small World*, between the anti-theoretical British Swallow and the over-theoretical American Zapp, synthesizes the attitude of some academics. Swallow: "Perhaps that's what we're all looking for—desire undiluted by habit." Zapp invokes the "Defamiliarization" (*Ostranenie*) of the Russian Formalists and quotes Viktor Shklovsky: "Habit devours objects, clothes, furniture, one's wife and the fear of war... Art exists to help us recover the sensation of life" (306).

Stimulants for Vitality and Hypocrisy

The question is whether these super-professionals are super-beings boiling with vitality or they suffer a devitalizing process the more they climb the social ladder. "The sensation of life" is guaranteed at different persons by the same stimuli. This unsuspected similarity explains the involuntary swapping of wives between two characters with opposite profiles. Harold Bloom remarked that the swarming opportunities and collective enthusiasms of the 1960s and 1970s were just traps set by the establishment. The authentic avant-gardist movements were over: "The Nineteen Sixties benefit from a general nostalgia compounded by political correctness and the sad truth that erstwhile Counter-culture has become Establishment-culture, visible upon every page of *The New York Times*" (Bloom 2).

This competitive, not to say aggressive behavior characteristic to men, generates strange responses from women: Hilary, Swallow's wife, when informed about her husband's infidelity, instead of divorcing him installs central heating in the house. The cheated wife reacts like a responsible mother, but her husband's problems are weird. While he is cheating on her, he is fearful of Zapp's allure as a perverse Humbert Humbert in front of his daughter Amanda, possibly a future Lolita (112). When Zapp reveals an unexpected humanitarian side by asking Hilary to shelter his American ex-student, the pregnant Mary Makepeace, Swallow reproaches her from his location in the States for accepting "an unmarried mother on the premises" (120). Once his hypocrisy is revealed, he tries to make amends by inviting Hilary to the USA. She rejects his proposal using Mary Makepeace's psychoanalytical-feminist interpretation: "men always try to end a dispute with a woman by raping her, either literally or symbolically" (130). The humorous intertextuality masks the utmost confusion in regards to crucial choices made in his life. Thus, Zapp is a catastrophic father. He had walked out on his daughter from his first marriage "leaving her a five-dollar bill to buy candy" (126), a decision considered by his second wife, Désiréé, "the most sordid transaction in the history of conscience-money" (126). The twins resulted from his second marriage take to cultivating marijuana, or what their mother calls "avant-gardening" (126). The competitive life grants no time for family or for spirituality. The interesting fact is that these competitors are not forced to climb up at a quick step the professional ladder. The tempo is set by everyone depending on their ambition. At the beginning of *Changing Places*, in the year 1969, we meet two academics, Philip Swallow and Morris Zapp. The former is only a lecturer who has published a few essays and reviews: "He lacked will and

ambition, the professional killer instinct which Zapp abundantly possessed" (12). Zapp is a full professor and published "five fiendishly clever books (four of them on Jane Austen)" (12).

Poststructuralist Kitsch

Under such circumstances, "self-realization and self-fulfilment have become central aspirations of self-polity […] in which every desire is a potential right, it is forbidden to forbid" (Goulimari 65). Hedonism and maximal professional development are more than interconnected: they fuel each other. One cannot resist the tough rhythm of competition without renewing their pleasures. At the same time, competition is a pleasurable activity in itself. Only those academics that evolve between these two poles are able to establish complex communicational routes. The other ones, the monomaniacs, become isolated and bury themselves in all sorts of minutiae. This is the reason why the Euphoria State University, with its gorgeous surroundings (rivers, lakes, forested mountains and a splendid bay), favors the gathering of highly-competitive academics. If the American euphoric paradise suggests Californian geography, the British Rummidge University reflects the dire cityscape of Birmingham, encompassed by factories, smog and motorways. Academic life here gets asphyxiated by routine and pettiness.

The broken parallelism between the two institutions is described by the quality of the symbolic simulacra they both find pride in. Rummidge and Euphoria have on their campuses a replica of the inclined Tower of Pisa, but restored to verticality in both cases. The American replica is built of white stone and "twice the original size," while the British one is made of red brick and "to scale" (Lodge 10). The architectural artifices are telling about the pomposity and loftiness on the one hand, and of pitiful scarcity on the other. When the two universities pay no attention to the original materials of construction and, even worse, change the peculiar and authenticating mark of a renowned monument, they both fall into hubris, through excess or through an insignificant approach.

In postmodernity, hubris is imbued with kitsch. Bad taste should not be the attribute of superior education. But, again, what are the purposes of such an elite education? Zapp dreams of writing *the ultimate* book on Jane Austen. This aspiration has structuralist implications: civilization is a hierarchical structure and some interpretations are central while others fall at the periphery. Structuralism is implicitly colonialist. Ten years later, Zapp makes a pirouette and gives up Jane Austen studies taking to poststructuralism. Not that he disliked his initial preoccupations, on the contrary, but he needed to stay fashionable if he wanted to remain active in the communicative relay of the academic world. On the other hand, Zapp's humor makes him more suitable to relativistic poststructuralism than to rigid structuralism. That is why his conference paper, *Textuality as Striptease*, excludes the possibility of establishing a final meaning. True intellectual existence implies an eternal quest:

> The classical tradition of striptease, however, which goes back to Salome's dance of the seven veils and beyond, and which survives in a debased form in the dives of your Soho, offers a valid metaphor for the activity of reading. The dancer teases the audience, as the text teases its readers, with the promise of an ultimate revelation that is infinitely postponed. (253)

Aiming at a crystal-clear understanding of texts and, in the end, of the world, would be similar to living as a possessive and reductionist couple does. Zapp invokes psychoanalytical hermeneutics: "Freud said that obsessive reading […] is the displaced expression of a desire to see the mother's genitals" (254). The text reacts as an untameable bachelor to this superficial and target-oriented reading: "The text unveils itself before us, but never allows itself to be possessed; and instead of striving to possess it we should take pleasure in its teasing" (254).

Academic Weaponry

The transparency of meaning encourages, paradoxically, the earthliness of the researchers. Multiple interpretational approaches seem to excuse the necessity of indulging in material attachments. Matter can be spiritualized following Zarathustra's perspective: "Remain faithful to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue! Let your bestowing love and your knowledge serve the meaning of the earth" (Nietzsche 57).

Excess is the rule of thumb in this academic enclave. A postmodernist mythology of hubris is frantically frequented by those who aspire to the highest ranks of academia. Swallow, in his turn, if he is not a fertile and creative scholar, compensates this drawback with excessive scrupulosity in examining his undergraduates. When Zapp arrives at Rummidge University and browses through Swallow's observations on his students, he is amazed at the level of knowledge regarding students' public and private lives (14).

In the same manner, in *Small World,* the young Angelica Pabst shows an erudition that baffles even the all-knowing ever-trendy Morris Zapp. She masters mediaeval culture as well the latest theories in literary criticism (257). If Zapp is an academic who approaches the university as if it were a corporation and "aims for financial and sexual success, loves power and is not despised or punished for being crass, sexist, competitive, hedonistic and horny" (Showalter 78), Angelica, as her name suggests, is fond of knowledge not only as power, but as intellectual nutrient in itself. She does not belong to that category of "successful female intellectuals [who] are necessarily either frigid or sexually deviant in one way or another" (Björk 120). She follows the same track pursued by the older academics: flies to conferences all over the world, writes articles and books and carries out extensive research documentation. But we can suppose, on account of her passion, that The Robbins Report of the Committee on Higher Education from 1963, upon which the Conservative Government of Margaret Thatcher based their politics of cutting financial resources for the universities**,** would not affect her dramatically.

Variegated Perks

The main difference between Philip Swallow and Morris Zapp is the approach to pleasure. Zapp "professionalizes" pleasure whenever he resorts to it, which is not a rare choice. Maybe the pun of the proper name ("to zap") aims exactly at this superficial, but edgy speediness. Even the private facets of pleasure are part of a competitive endeavor, as Désireé confesses: "with Morris it had to be a four-star fuck every time. If I didn't groan and roll my eyes and foam at the mouth at climax he would accuse me of going frigid on him" (144). This is one reason—getting tired with such performances in marriage—for Désireé's transformation into a writer of feminist best-sellers. Philip Swallow indulges in milder pleasures, even if, with the chance of landing on the American territory, he diversifies the range of hedonistic involvements. He reads out of pure interest and does not have a Ph. D. The English academic milieu tolerates such a relaxed professional life. In exchange, Morris Zapp is disconcerted by the cozy atmosphere of the British university: "No talk of 'lows' or 'highs' here: all was moderate, qualified, temperate" (173). A non-competitive environment seems stifling for him, as he needs external stimuli. Sex is another mark of domination and that is why he interprets Jane Austen's later novels in terms of Eros and Agape. When one male character of Jane Austen offers a woman a pencil without lead, this is interpreted as a psychoanalytic suggestion of impotence (186). Such a "hermeneutic of suspicion" (Ricoeur 34) is indicative of the fissures in self-assurance and in inner resources. In order to boost his energy, Morris Zapp proposes "group marriage," as a unique opportunity to "pool their [the two swapping couples] resources" (213).

In *Small World: An Academic Romance*, the academic is presented as a modern knight-errant, flying from one conference to another. The archetypal model for the globalized academic world is the Arthurian romance. But exactly as it happened in Camelot, the knights—be they old or new—need challenges in order to preserve their high-spirits. Intellectual and spiritual contemplation does not constitute a sufficiently-powerful incentive. Derek Pearsall highlighted Arthurian passivity, if not exhaustion:

> In the English tradition from which he was transplanted, King Arthur himself had a very limited romantic interest: he has no interesting love-affairs either before or after his early marriage. It seems impossible to imagine any being invented for him. So, in Arthurian romance he is relegated to the role of, at best, a great king who stays at home while his knights go off on romantic adventures and report back to him, or, at worst, an ineffectual cuckold. Nothing is said of his campaigns against the Saxons and the Romans. Arthurian romance has Arthur's court as its background or point of reference, but it is not about Arthur. (20)

Conclusions

We should consider King Arthur's wisdom and self-possession as an explanation for his sedentary attitude. On the contrary, faculty members in the postmodern era continuously seek stimulants to keep them in the academic race. The imperative of external stimuli indicates that they are not super-humans, but only super-clerks, dependent on the resources allocated by the government to the universities. Sooner than later, in Margaret Thatcher's epoch the politicians spotted the weak point and aimed at it: universities were forced to become corporatist in their educational approach.

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Strategies of Cultural Memory and Cultural Identity Retrieval—the Case of Yvette Melanson' s *Looking for Lost Bird* and Victoria Donda's *My Name Is Victoria*

Abstract: The article is focused on the autobiographical memories of two adoptees, a Native-American Lost Bird and an Argentinean Desaparecida. They are both similar and dissimilar in the way their cultural memories and cultural identities have been wiped out by the regimes of their countries. The two memoirs narrate the events leading to the discovery of their true cultural heritage and their reaction to the shocking reality of their identities. The cultural heritage that had been imposed on them through their kidnapping and subsequent adoptions had been that of Jewishness and of loyalty to the Argentinean political regime. The article proposes an analysis of the strategies used for appropriating the lost cultural heritage. At 43/45 years of age (in 1996), Melanson moved her family to the Navajo Reservation (Tolani Lake, AZ) to walk the traditional path her ancestors had walked before her, on a quest to retrieve the identity of which she had been deprived, hoping to find her twin brother. Analía Perez discovered her identity at 27/29 years of age (in 2004), and immediately embraced the name her biological parents had given her; moreover, she also followed in their footsteps both in terms of her education and her political involvement.

Keywords: cultural memory; cultural identity; collective memory; mnemonic communities; identity retrieval.

Motto: "A nation that does not know its own history has no future" (Oglala Lakota activist Russell Means)[16]

Introduction

Yvette Melanson's words—"First, who am I? With what do I identify? With whom? Secondly, what have I become with the who that I am? And thirdly, why am I here? What is my purpose?" (14)—reveal the reason for which both Analía Perez and Yvette Melanson wrote their memoirs. These memoirs were meant to be a journey towards self-discovery and towards the retrieval of an identity denied to them due to the fact that they had been abducted and adopted into families that could not be more dissimilar to their birth families. The cultural heritage and the identity meant for the writers of the two memoirs considered in this paper—*Looking for Lost Bird: A Jewish Woman Discovers Her Navajo Roots* and *My Name is Victoria* (*O victimă a dictaturii argentiniene: Recuperarea unei identități)*[17]—were wiped out of existence. In effect, they provide a twist to Descartes saying *Cogito ergo sum*, turning it into 'I remember therefore I am.' By not remembering their mnemonic communities, the two adoptees are an example of the consequences of such abductions and adoptions. The epigraph points to the same potential outcome, the disappearance of a community. By removing the children of a group—either a political or an ethnic one—the effect is that the group loses its past, present and future. The intention of the Argentinean regime in removing the political dissidents and taking away their children and handing them over to 'loyal' families, was to ensure that the cultural heritage of those with left-wing sympathies would be obliterated.

[16] Patricia Cotter-Busbee and Trace A. DeMeyer, eds. *Two Worlds: Lost Children of the Indian Adoption Projects.* Blue Hand Book, 2012. Kindle Edition.
[17] All the subsequent quotes from Donda's memoir are translated by me

The Native Americans and the Argentinean political dissidents were deprived of their children—for two decades starting in the 1950s and ending in the 1970s and, respectively, from 1976 to 1983. The Argentinean left-wing supporters were defeated on a political, military and ideological level. In both cases, by taking away the children, these two groups were also deprived of their history. The children were placed in families that would raise them in ways contrary to either their traditions or their ideological beliefs. Victoria Donda thus outlines the situation in Argentina, simultaneously providing a synopsis of the situation of the Native Americans: the political dissidents within the Argentinean authoritarian regime were left without an identity, heritage, history, memory, children (Donda 63).

The Historical Contexts

The historical context of the Dirty War started with the military coup that removed Isabel Perón from power (Kaiser 201). From 1976 to 1983, the Argentinean military junta launched this war on its own people "ostensibly against subversion" (Armony 305), claiming that they were acting in the best interest of the nation. During this time, 30,000 left-wing supporters disappeared, were tortured and presumably killed in the detention centers. Their children—either born in captivity or before their detention—were removed from the family and adopted by the partisans of the regime. The end of the dictatorship marked the "issue of a 'self-amnesty'" (Kaiser 201). The *Comisión Nacional para la Desaparición de Personas* (CONADEP) was established, meant to investigate disappearances, the trials of the Military Juntas followed, resulting in life term sentences for the top commanders. In 1986 and 1987, the impunity laws were passed—"Full Stop"—applying "the statute of limitations to the prosecution of torturers and assassins" and "'Due Obedience' acquitting *represores*, on the basis that they obeyed orders" (Kaiser 201). Carlos Saúl Menem, the Peronist president leading Argentina from 1989–1999, offered Decrees of Pardon to the "officers not covered by the impunity laws" and pardoned the "*represores* and guerrilla leaders serving time" (Kaiser 201). Finally, with the arrival in power of Néstor Kirchner, the impunity laws were nullified and those who had tortured their co-nationals were to stand trial (Kaiser 201). At this time, the actions of the CONADEP, *Hijos por la Identidad y la Justicia contra el Olvido y el Silencio* (HIJOS) and the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* were far more successful. In fact, of the approximately 500 babies stolen, 100 have been found according to the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* Association (Scott-NPR).

In the case of the Native Americans, the Indian Adoption Projects from the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s were administered by "the Child Welfare League of America and funded by a federal contract from the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the U.S. Children's Bureau" (*TAHD*).[18] During the progress of these projects, "395 Native American children from 16 western states" were placed with white families (*TAHD*). Trace A. DeMeyer argues[19] that in the case of Native American children, the adoptions—meant to be permanent and closed—were "the ultimate weapon," victimizing both children and parents/grandparents. The Indian Adoption Projects and Programs ensured that the Indian children disappeared from playgrounds or backyards or hospitals; nonetheless not all of them were adopted—some "were placed in orphanages and foster homes" (DeMeyer *TWLCIAP*). Those who were adopted were placed in white families: "about one in four Indian children were taken from their homes and placed in non-Indian settings. It was done by bending and sometimes breaking the law of the land. It was done, white Americans said, 'for the good of the child'" (Melanson 3). In addition, the adoptive parents were also unaware of the illegalities committed by those who brought them the child they would adopt. These children were treated as contraband, moved from one foster home to another, until their trail was cold:

[18] TAHD: The Adoption History Project. http://pages.uoregon.edu/adoption/people/cwla.html

[19] In *Two Worlds: Lost Children of the Indian Adoption Projects.* https://www.academia.edu/2940086/Two_Worlds_Lost_Children_of_the_Indian_Adoption_Projects

> I was one of those stolen babies (…) taken illegally from my birth parents when I was a few days old (…) separated from my twin brother (…) passed from person to person, like contraband that was too hot to keep. Then, when the trail had cooled and I was three years old, I was placed in adoption with Beatrice and Lawrence Silverman. (Melanson 4)

Native American tribes were considered sovereign nations from a legal viewpoint—thus, transracial adoptions such as these were against the grain, placing "an entire child population across lines of nation, culture, and race" (*TAHD*). The government's plan was to 'civilize' the Native Americans, who were considered too poor and not intelligent enough to raise their own children: "The children were scooped up by social workers or missionaries who claimed their parents were 'too poor' or 'too ignorant', or 'too drunk' or 'too savage' to raise their own children" (Melanson 4).

The removal of Native children from their culture had a very specific purpose—that of destroying the future generations of Indians and ensuring that the "adopted children would not have treaty rights. Adopted children would disappear" (DeMeyer *TWLCIAP*). Children were taken from their families at any age and sent to schools where they were "forbidden to use their language and taught to forget their own culture" (Melanson 4). The result was to effectively ethnically cleanse "an entire population of Indian children" (DeMeyer *TWLCIAP*). The Indian Adoption Project was denounced as a genocidal policy toward native communities and cultures (*TAHD*). In 1978, activists saw their efforts come to fruition through the Indian Child Welfare Act which increased the difficulty for a non-Native family to adopt a Native-American child (*TAHD*). The projects were no longer active, but the "victims of these adoption programs have not received a formal apology in the United States" (DeMeyer *TWLCIAP*). The sealed adoptions and the closed birth records (in 2012) have prevented the adoptees from returning home, since the birth certificates were amended and falsified (DeMeyer *TWLCIAP*) and the biological parents are still unable to find their children.

In fact, in Yvette Melanson's case, the date on her birth certificate was August 1955, while her real year of birth was September 1953 (18). The same methods were used in Argentina for the children of the *Desaparecidos*—in Analia Perez's case, the dates were 1979 and 1977, respectively. This difference of two years between their real age and the one in their falsified birth records allowed those in charge of the adoptions to hide the girls more efficiently; however, it was also a reason for disquietude—at least in Analia's case, who felt more mature than her classmates. Analia was deprived of two years of her life leading to feelings of isolation and inadequacy growing up due to the differences from those she considered her peers. (Donda 64, 65, 69)

Review of Cultural and Social Memory Theories—The Mnemonic Community as Purveyor of Cultural Memory

Jan Assmann defines cultural memory as an institution that is exteriorized and objectified and has stability due to the symbolic forms in which it is stored and which are transmitted across situations, space and time (110-111). Such carriers of cultural memory enable the creation of a cultural identity, a fact that becomes particularly obvious in the case of mnemonic communities: "On the social level, with respect to groups and societies, the role of external symbols becomes even more important, because groups which, of course, do not 'have' a memory tend to 'make' themselves one by means of things meant as reminders such as monuments, museums, libraries, archives, and other mnemonic institutions" (Assmann 111).

The cultural memory of such groups is clearly invested in the external objects that in one way or another represent the community. However, in terms of what is transmitted from one generation to the next, cultural memory "exists also in disembodied form and requires institutions of preservation and reembodiment" (Assmann 111).

In the case of the Navajos, whose culture tends towards the oral, by removing children from the tribe, those in charge of the Indian Adoption Projects ensured a discontinuity in the transmission of cultural memory. The traditional beliefs regarding "the origin of the world and the early history of the tribe (…)

[are not part of] everyday communication but intensely formalized and institutionalized (…) [as] narratives, songs, dances, rituals, masks, and symbols (…) [which are instantiated] when the community comes together for a celebration" (Assmann 112).

Another instance of cultural memory that Jan Assmann brings into discussion is related to "fixed points in the past" and the way they relate to the present, since the past is important only as "it is remembered" (Assmann 113). Therefore, the historical consciousness termed cultural memory relies heavily on those who remember; it "reaches back into the past only so far as the past can be reclaimed as 'ours'" (Assmann 113). This makes the temporal horizon of cultural memory an important element to consider. A necessary clarification reveals the fact that this sort of cultural memory does not deal with knowledge about the past as it is learned from books. The knowledge about the past that is inherent to cultural memory is what is remembered in a mnemonic community and it deals with how that past relates to that particular group and to how the group mediates the past through representations (Misztal 12). Under these circumstances, this type of knowledge of the past is an integral part of what gives the identity of that particular mnemonic community: "Knowledge about the past acquires the properties and functions of memory if it is related to a concept of identity" (Assmann 113).

Barbara Misztal's research focusses on social remembering and as such she asserts that people remember things as members of their social group and thus they internalize common traditions and representations shared by their collectivities. She discusses "cultural memory as a memory institutionalized through cultural means," referring to the "memories constructed from the cultural forms and to the cultural forms available for the use by the people to construct their relations to the past" (11). Cultural memory is embodied in the practices of a community which are repeated regularly and in commemorations, ceremonies, monuments and festivals and it can exist independently of its carriers (11-12). In order to give substance to a group, cultural memory deals with the personal remembrance through the lens of experience, as well as the collective remembrance of the past of the mnemonic community. The embeddedness of memories in a group that socializes its members towards what to remember and what to forget constitutes a community of memory, or what Barbara Misztal calls a mnemonic community (14). Mnemonic communities—such as the family, ethnic group, nation—"affect the 'depth' of our memory; they regulate how far back we should remember, which part of the past should be remembered, which events mark the beginning and which should be forced out of our story. The process of our mnemonic socialization is an important part of all groups' general effort to incorporate new members" (14).

Consequently, the group that socializes an individual has a great deal of influence on the way that individual will behave in an array of circumstances, all based on the memories embedded in his or her consciousness. This will obviously affect the individual's cultural identity. By removing children from an ethnic or political group (the Navajo, the left-wing dissidents in Argentina), it was ensured that this cultural socialization within a mnemonic group would affect the individuality of those children, by creating for them identities far removed from the identity of their forebears. This process of socialization within a community of memory is subtle and tacit; it may be implicitly achieved through hearing family members narrate a shared experience indicating those elements that are memorable and those that are forgettable (Zerubavel qtd. in Misztal 14). Consequently, these communities of memory socialize people in terms of a collective past. The outcome is that those socialized within the community identify with its past attaining the "required social identity" (Misztal 14).

The Political and Traditional Heritage—Cultural Memory Retrieved

The fourth section focuses on Analia's discovery of her parents' path—the political one—and on Yvette's discovery of the cultural traditions of the Navajo. Each of the two adoptees re-appropriated a part of the cultural identity and memory through the steps taken to walk in the shoes of their mothers.

Analia was already inclined towards a life of public service—which was shown by her previous attempts to support a cultural center and her volunteering work. In Yvette's case, she was not ready for the traditions of the Navajo, having to deal with her own prejudices; nevertheless, her struggles are all the more impressive and the results admirable. Cultures connect individuals based on shared norms and memories to the meaningful world and how it is experienced; therefore, the individuals can frame their identity through: "orientating symbols (…) embodied in the objectified forms of a commonly shared cultural tradition" (Harth 86).

Militancy was what saved Analia once she found out her roots and it prevented her from disintegrating from the shock. However, unlike other recovered grandchildren, Analia was already a left-wing activist; therefore, she was not surprised by her parents' ideology. The same militancy was also one of the things she had in common with her maternal grandmother, Leontina, who was one of the 12 founders of the *Abuelas de la Plaza de Mayo* organization. Analia identified with her parents due to what she believed to be genetic determinism. Before she was aware of her identity as Victoria, Analia had a choice between two avenues of study—sociology or law—which she considered a reflection of her real parents' influence on her, regardless of their presence in her life. Analia also joined the youth organization *La Venceremos*, indicating that she shared her real parents' ideals (Donda 98, 99).

In Yvette's case, once she finds out of her heritage, she sets out to visit the Navajo Nation. On returning home, she received a package from her relatives with all the things she had admired on her visit—a Native American custom, which in effect makes sure that no one feels envy, by being gifted with the things one has admired:

> I found a collection of gifts from the heart. Wrapped in tissue paper, there was the embroidered and beaded dress that I had admired on one of my sisters. Protected by cotton wool, there was the turquoise bracelet I had asked to try on. There was the blue shirt that I had told another sister was 'so pretty.' And there were the moccasins that I had borrowed from someone else because they felt so good on my feet. (Melanson 9)

Another tradition she finds out about is that of burying a child's umbilical cord to ensure s/he would return home. She identifies with the Lost Bird—Zintkala Nuni—and questions her previous wanderlust. In addition, she wonders whether it was her instincts that led her home. The custom brings a very emotional response in her. This is the first step for her in trying to retrieve the identity that was lost to her for 43 years. In addition, she finds out that as a twin, she was favored by the gods of the Navajo, but since she had been separated from her brother, they were both in danger (Melanson 17). On the road driving towards the Reservation, Yvette considers this journey her Vision Quest. The road trip is interspersed with knowledge and memories acquired later, but the Navajo traditions seem to make an appearance as a result of the actions she witnesses. Her daughters' laughter makes her think of how her own mother had been deprived of hearing her first laughter, which is compared with the Jewish circumcision, or naming ceremonies, and with the Christian baptism. Another rite of passage revealed to her is that of the *kinaalda*—the coming-of-age ceremony for girls: "it was as old as history. Navajos believed that the first one was held for Changing Woman, the mother of us all. It begins as soon as possible after a girl's first menstruation, and it lasts for four days" (62). Yvette's daughters go through the ceremony—running towards the four cardinal points, on each day towards a new direction.

The most important tradition that she appropriates, however, has to do with creating traditional Navajo rugs. Her mother before her had been a talented artisan whose rugs were widely-sought after. Her sisters and aunt teach Yvette this tradition. Weaving rugs acts both as a strategy for cultural memory and cultural identity retrieval, as well as a type of therapy. In terms of identity, Yvette starts making the same movements her mother had before her. Furthermore, Yvette offers an analogy for these movements in "the patterning (…) for brain-damaged children," since she believes that the shock of finding out about her biological family requires "new synapses and pathways in [her] brain" (141). Thus, Yvette literally steps

into her mother's shoes, walks the same path as her and as Spider Woman, one of the mythological beings of the Navajo, who was said to have been the first weaver.

In terms of their relationships with their adoptive and biological families, the two adoptees take opposite positions. Yvette's adoptive family lets her down, whereas her biological family welcomes her. For Analia, the reverse is true—she remains close to her adoptive parents even after finding out that her father was one of the torturers of the regime, while her biological family disappoints her on various fronts. Yvette Melanson, raised by the Silvermans, becomes her mother's ideal girl as well as a tomboy in order to please her father. On Beatrice's death, Lawrence remarried but the new wife did not want Yvette around. Her numerous Navajo family (five more siblings) supports her and her family when they move to Arizona, since work was hard to find there. From the very beginning Yvette felt loved and understood: "It was very uncanny the way I slid into this family. I usually hold back. But they thought just the way I did, acted the way I did" (Brawarsky 1).

In Analia's case, aside from not talking about politics with her adopted father, she always felt loved and appreciated within the adoptive family. When she encounters her biological family, she feels rejected by her real uncle, who had been instrumental in having her father captured and her mother killed. He "was responsible for the double disappearance of my parents: the first one, the physical disappearance, achieved by means of their sequestration by the operation groups commanded by him" (Donda 110). To truly destroy the rebellious legacy of the Donda family, Adolfo Donda Tigel had also sued her maternal family in order to adopt Victoria's older sister, who was raised and educated in such a way as to completely reject the legacy of her real parents, whom she saw as traitors. Even her name had been changed from Eva Daniela to Daniela: "the second disappearance was a symbolic one, by destroying what my parents had left behind—my sister, by changing her name and endlessly lying to her and by handing me over to strangers as if I was a gift or a pet" (110). Thus, Analia's sister, Daniela, was raised to believe that her parents had abandoned her by being truthful to their political beliefs; therefore, she believed them to be delinquents (160). In addition, Clara, Analia's adopted sister, was closer to her than Daniela. Although a blood bond united them, Analia had to sue her sister Daniela in order to obtain a photo of her father and some letters: "my first contact with the life that had been denied to me was a total failure. It is quite strange to consider how different Daniela and I are, how intangible and almost inexistent is the connection that unites us: the blood bond" (164). As a result of the unhappy encounter with her sister, Victoria refrained from contacting the rest of her family: "in my first moments as Victoria I did not have the strength or the will to open myself up to an entirely new family" (165).

On recovering a lost grandchild, the *Abuelas* gave them a folder with testimonials regarding their parents. Victoria's real parents were nothing but a memory for those who had known them, to her though they were merely mediated memories: "my true parents, as I mentioned before had appeared in my life to simultaneously disappear once again: not only were they dead, but they had disappeared as well. (…) The only thing I had (…) were these pages, (…) which told incomplete and fragmented stories of their lives" (168). In order to obtain a more complete view of them, Victoria travelled to Canada to meet her grandmother Leontina, who had been diagnosed with Alzheimer. Leontina had fought indefatigably against oblivion and now she was "the victim of a disease that would make her lose any notion of what she had lived, even of herself. It was hard not to think of the fact that a veil of forgetfulness would cover the last year of that woman, erasing from her mind the great traumas she had lived through" (171). The meaning of Leontina's life and the last memories of a beloved daughter were being wrenched away from her. Victoria realized during her visit—when a documentary was filmed as well—that she did not really wish to become close to them and that they seemed to share that feeling: "there was no real desire to become closer to each other, to truly get to know the person found beyond what each of us represent within the family. We all wanted one way or another to find Cori anew, or to find what we loved about her, in the person now standing before us" (175).

The New Identity—Cultural Identity Retrieved by Shedding the Old and Embracing the New

For Yvette Melanson, the new identity that is uncovered is problematic, since it represents an abrupt departure from all that she had previously known. In addition, she has to struggle against the stereotypes accumulated during the 43 years she has lived as a white woman in terms of the Native American people. One truth remains—and it is closely connected to a Navajo custom—throughout her life, Yvette was restless and moved around incessantly. This migratory behavior—explained by the fact that she did not know where her umbilical cord was buried—disappears once she has found her new identity:

> I have lived most of my life without much of a past and without being very certain of who I am. Maybe that's true of anyone who was adopted. But when you go looking for your true self, you don't always find what you'd expected. I was still shaky with what I'd learned about my once and future selves.
> I used to be white.
> I used to be Jewish.
> I used to be rich.
> (…) I used to be from New York. (6)

Despite the fact that she had not changed, her identity was no longer the same; nonetheless, she is ready to embrace it. As a result, she moves to the Reservation where learning more about her new cultural identity will become reality. This is a time during which she questions all her assumptions about her identity—from being Jewish to the shape of her face, the color of her hair, eyes and skin: "I was morphing into something new, no longer the woman I used to think I was, not yet the woman I was born to be" (6). All these doubts are to be expected if one considers the cultural distance between the Jewish people and the Navajo. Yvette Melanson wonders if leaving her old identity behind is a necessity or whether she could perhaps retain some remnants of her old identity. The analogy she imagines for herself is that of a snake shedding its skin: "I was about to step out of my old identity, like a snake shedding its skin, and try on a new one" (8).

The former and the current cultures are at war in her case due to the prejudices of both the Melanson family and the Navajo family. On both sides there are well-ingrained beliefs and in the case of the Navajo the wounds caused by the white people are deep and still unhealed. One of the strategies Yvette uses to cope with the biases accumulated in her life as a white Jewish woman is that of humor—she openly admits to having acquired her stereotypes from "John Wayne movies" (11). Thus, it is understandable that she resists the idea of being American Indian initially. In addition, some of the pop culture references she mentions also indicate a less than stellar attitude towards those she must now consider kin: "*The Last of the Mohicans*. The craggy face on the buffalo nickel. Geronimo on the warpath. The painted faces and half-naked bodies, swooping down on innocent wagon trains. The fearless Mohawks who walked the high steel to build New York's skyscrapers. The nobler-than-thou Indians of *Dances with Wolves*" (56).

Moreover, her life as part of the Silverman family had not prepared her for being part of an ethnic group she all but believed extinct.

For Analia, the pain of reclaiming an identity that was lost and shrouded in national controversy is great; however, the cultural shock is not as great as in the previous situation. Nevertheless, the circumstances make it more traumatic due to the involvement of her uncle Adolfo Donda Tigel as well as due to her sister's rejection of what their parents had stood for and of herself. In addition, Analia/Victoria comes to an important epiphany in terms of identity: "there is a common point: our identity, our roots, are one of the first things we are given, these are the cards we have at the beginning of the game. Refusing someone's right to these cards is like you are depriving that person of a foundation on which they would build their lives" (Donda 63). This refusal of the political regime to allow the left-wing supporters to lead their lives takes a further and more extreme dimension in depriving them of their lives and of their heritage by taking away their children. The foundation one's identity is meant to represent is insubstantial in the

circumstances surrounding the death of parents, kidnapping and illegal adoption of the children. It is hard for any of the sons or daughters of the *Desaparecidos* to build upon the shaky foundation they were offered by the circumstances. However, as opposed to Yvette Melanson, Analia did not know she was adopted. Events hasten and after her adoptive father's attempted suicide, due to the news unmasking him and the accusations leveled at him, the representatives of the Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo contact her.

It is under these circumstances that Victoria Donda is reborn; nevertheless, she does not shy away from her previous identity: "my real life does not begin at 27 and what I had lived previously was not simply and unanimously a lie" (84). Therefore, as opposed to Yvette Melanson, who—while struggling with her new identity—is eager to shed her former one, Analia is not a part of her which Victoria is willing to part with. While Victoria is who she was always meant to be—Analia has provided her with the foundation she needs to confront her new cultural identity and the cultural memories to which any number of family members might subject her. A salient twist in Victoria's interpretation of the situation is that of seeing the greater picture and imagining herself as part of the historical moment that she has lived through:

> My story, that I am narrating within these pages, is not only mine—Victoria or Analia's story, but rather, in a sense, it is the story of Argentina, a story full of intolerance, violence and lies whose consequences can still be felt, and which will not be complete until even the last of the stolen children during the dictatorship will not have recovered their true identity, until even the last of those responsible for these barbaric actions will have been tried for their crimes, until even the last of the 30,000 disappeared will have been given a name, a history and circumstance of death, and until even the last of their relatives will have been able, to finally mourn their dearly departed. (84)

Victoria opts to consider her plight in the greater context of the children of the *Desaparecidos*. In addition, her penchant for politics can be detected in the passage presented above. She places herself in the intricate web of all those who had undergone the same predicament, she identifies with them and with Argentinean history. This tendency becomes a strategy in retrieving a cultural identity.

As opposed to Analia/Victoria's ease in accepting her changed circumstances, Yvette's quest towards her new identity included "wrong turns and blind alleys" (Melanson 39). But on this road to self-discovery and towards the appropriation of her Native cultural memory and the retrieval of her cultural identity, Melanson was not merely attempting to pinpoint her new identity or to grapple with the old one—her attempts were aimed at a negotiation between the old and the new: "I was looking for the crossroads where my identities might meet" (39). The cultural memory of the Navajos had already taught her a valuable lesson: "Cultures meet. Cultures merge. I've been told that it's the Navajo way" (54). Thus, her Jewishness is not an impediment, her having been raised as a white woman is not an obstacle. These are merely potential assets in her new life, since the way she will treat any given situation will not be that of the typical Native woman. As a Jew belonging to the Navajo Nation and to her parents' separate clans, Melanson was to become an Indian-giver—someone who receives a gift and at some point in the future finds a way to reward the giver in a valuable way. Melanson was "Tobacco Clan, born for Salt Clan. Tachii'nii, born for Ashiihi" (57). But her combative character allows her not only to establish a craft business on the Reservation, selling the rugs she weaves, but also to speak up for the daughters of the Navajo women at Tolani Lake, AZ, when she realizes that her daughters as well as the other young girls were being harassed in school. An education provided by her biological family and immersed in the cultural memory of the Navajo and a cultural identity acquired within her Navajo mnemonic community would have prevented her from acting decisively in favor of her community. At the very end, she also succeeds in finding her twin brother and they undergo a cleansing ceremony together.

Yvette Melanson or Minnie Bob Monroe—these are not the choices she makes in terms of identity. The shift for her is more dramatic than what a name might signify—instead, she relocates on the Reservation in order to be better able to absorb as much of the culture she was supposed to have lived in.

She takes a traditional road—not merely in the sense that she learns about the Navajo traditions, but by relocating and listening to the stories and memories of the mnemonic community. She walks the same roads as her mother had, she is told the significance of each place and action, she is taught about the culture and its traditions and finally she not only learns how to weave rugs, but—as an Indian-giver—she brings value to the community not only by creating a business to sell the Native art, but also by standing up for the daughters on the Reservation who had been harassed in school. She absorbs the teachings of the Navajo accepting the meeting of cultures and merging the elements of the two selves, finally finding a crossroads where the two identities—old and new—meet.

Analia's reclaiming of the new identity occurs through the return to the name her mother had given her: "my true name—the one my mother had used for me in the 15 days I had been kept by her side before she was killed, regained its full meaning for me at this time of my life" (Donda 85). But this return is once more not marked by the disappearance of the previous identity of Analia: "not by imposing itself before Analia, not by replacing her, but rather by molding her, preparing the terrain so that they could live together" (85). In Analia/Victoria's case, the merging seems even more seamless, since the terrain had been prepared by what was to follow through Analia's activism and militancy and her awareness of and partiality to the ideologies of her biological parents. The shock had a lesser impact since she was aware of the plight of the families of the *Desaparecidos* through the activities of the *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* and *HIJOS* organizations. The reality of the found children of the former left-wing supporters, that had been terminated by the 1976-1983 dictatorship, simply became more personal in nature. Under these circumstances Analia became Victoria in name, but at an underlying level she never changed: "when my true origins were revealed to me, I was to accept them with the certainty of someone who knew that she wasn't dealing with two persons at the same time, Analia and Victoria, but that those two persons, those two names and those two histories were one and the same: me" (85).

Thus, the two names refer to the same person and the conflict between the two identities is mostly seen in her treatment of the two families—the adoptive and the biological one. In addition, she follows in the footsteps of her biological parents.

Victoria rightly observes in her memoirs referring to the construction of an identity in the case of kidnapped children—such as herself and the other approximately 499 sons and daughters of the *Desaparecidos*: "for the kidnapped children it was impossible to build an identity, a history and a life without knowing our roots, heritage, without knowing who we are and who our real family is" (Donda 140). Indeed, once their identity as one of the HIJOS is revealed to them, this is the case. She fails to notice that, aside from the restlessness felt due to the difference between her assumed and real age and her political aspirations that took a different direction than those of her adoptive father, Analia was well on her way to having a well-rounded and well-established identity. In effect, she does not give up that identity once she finds out the truth. Perhaps her observation would be more pertinent if focused on the predicament of those who already knew they had been adopted, as is the case of Yvette Melanson. The earlier metaphor she offered—that of the hand of cards offered at the beginning of game and used as a foundation—is further explained. The foundation comprises facts such as the birth place, the parents, and real age/year of birth. This foundation—not her identity as Analia—is what Victoria leaves behind: "Analia was not condemned to disappear. I am Analia. What was going to disappear indeed, or to be more exact, what was going to be torn down, were the basis on which Analia was built: the birth place, the parents, even the real age" (141). Victoria redefines herself in terms of her past and the assimilated cultural memories brought forth by her mnemonic community (the biological family), but Analia does not disappear since she is integral part of her. Thus, the new identity is assumed and Victoria repositions herself while finding a place for Analia (166).

The quests undergone by the two adoptees can be seen as individual and traditional for Yvette Melanson, who assimilates the Navajo teachings of her mnemonic community. In fact, she learns how to

be part of that community and as an interview indicates, she tries to walk in harmony with the universe by being aware of who she is, in accordance with a Navajo proverb (Brawarsky 1). In this, she tries to follow a spiritual path. In addition, she is able to integrate her identities as both a Navajo and a Jew. The Passover tradition continues to be celebrated in her home, the dietary restrictions common to the Navajo and the Jews are also observed, and she finds the familiarity of living in a community (the Reservation versus the Kibbutz) as pointing to "the communal sense of purpose and caring for one another" (Brawarsky 1). Thus, at the very book of her memoir, Yvette Melanson has come to the realization that she has finally found herself despite having looked for a family. The necessary harmony with her surroundings and her mnemonic community are two more achievements. Moreover, she has also reached the necessary wisdom to no longer offer resistance to every situation she confronts, instead learning flexibility and adaptability. The new path she has adopted after her Vision Quest and her return to the Reservation from which she was kidnapped and the Navajo tribe that had mourned her disappearance runs parallel to the 'Moses Road' she has previously been on.

For Analia Azic, the road taken is a historical and national one. She adopts various strategies in order to deal with the shock of her identity by going to therapy, being part of the creation of a documentary and by writing the memoir. The documentary's destabilizing result led to confrontations with Adolfo Donda Tigel and she had to deal with threats. Another difficulty she encountered related to obtaining new documents in her real name due to the hindrances of bureaucracy. Another strategy was that of taking on new responsibilities in public life as the youngest female representative, as well as the first recovered granddaughter that could do something regarding the situation of the children of the *Desaparecidos*. Analia's final strategy was that of using the media—her interviews with various television channels and the documentary—to confront the ghosts of her past and to provide liberation from the terrible burden that was placed upon her shoulders. The documentary also allowed her to gather information about her parents and to construct a faithful image of their lives and characters. This was a necessary stage for her recovery of the identity she was denied so that she could come to the realization that her parents lived on in her.

Autobiographical Memory—Re-writing the Life-story

If we were to consider the case of a person suffering from retrograde amnesia, who was told the story of his/her life from the point of view of the mnemonic community to which he/she belonged, the situation would not be entirely dissimilar from that of Yvette Melanson and Victorian Donda. The cultural memories they learn about as adults will never be autobiographical or lived. Thus, an essential kernel of their potential identities was removed with the removal from their mnemonic communities. Perhaps, in Victoria Donda's case, the cultural shock was not as great as in the case of Yvette Melanson, who had to adjust her self-image and to reject all the biases absorbed about her biological or genetic inheritance, by means of the culture in which she was socialized.

The subjective experience of remembering is not the main strategy for Melanson and Donda, since the cultural memories they should have been inscribed with are missing in their cases. What we are dealing with are actually memories that can be termed collective (Halbwachs), social (Misztal), or even communicative (Assmann), which are then presented through the lens of personal interpretation. The selves that the two adoptees were born to be are seen as cognitive and emotional constructs. The canonical version of past events is defined as history, but in these two cases, the memoirs challenge that particular version moving into the realm of autobiographical memory. The difference between the two resides in what is voiced and what is silenced. In view of this distinction, Robyn Fivush's discussion of voice as a form of power is particularly relevant for the memoirs of the two abductees/adoptees (76). Fivush asserts that "what is voiced changes with changing historical, social and political contexts" (76), resulting in the inclusion or exclusion of specific events and the memories of specific groups of people. In the

previous political context of Argentina, the children of those who had disappeared during the 1976-1983 dictatorship, as well as the events of those times, were kept quiet. With the change of regime, they were given voice. In the case of the situation of the Native American children that had been removed from their families and adopted by white families—the propitious times came with the proliferation of watchdog organizations and an increased awareness and observance of human rights.

Fivush's discussion of the spoken and unspoken, voiced and silenced memories is particularly applicable in the case of the two memoir writers. Through these memoirs, they share their personal stories with others in order to make sense of not only their personal memories, but also those of their mnemonic communities, namely their biological families. They accept reminiscences about the past and about their parents in lieu of actual lived experience, since they are trying to reconstruct a cultural memory and a cultural identity that had been withheld. In addition, the impossibility of experiencing these cultural memories and a relative reluctance become apparent—while Melanson moves to the Reservation, Donda only visits her biological family in Canada when circumstances make it clear that she might never find out about her mother if she does not go at that time, since her grandmother Leontina had been diagnosed with Alzheimer's. In addition, while there, she feels that everyone she encounters is simply trying to find Cori (her mother) once again through the others, rather than actually dealing with the reality of this new mnemonic community she had been shoved into.

In Melanson's case, her biological father is still alive, and the entire tribe or clan or extended family is there to reminisce about her mother, but more specifically five of her six other siblings are those who tell her the stories of their family, clan, tribe and the plight of their ethnic group. In Donda's case, the mnemonic community is formed by the nation and the troublesome past of the Argentinean dictatorship with the state terrorism it engendered, the left-wing supporters from that time and their families (including organizations such as *Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo* and *HIJOS*) and finally her own biological family.

Robyn Fivush is further relevant for this discussion of cultural memory and identity in terms of the way in which the two female abductees and adoptees structure their interpretations of their new cultural memories and cultural identities when they are writing their memoirs. Fivush argues that the construction of the self is different in Eastern and Western cultures, since in the first case, the self is seen as part of a community and in the second, it is constructed through individual choices and decisions (76). In addition, Eastern voiced autobiographies deal with the community and relationships and Western ones focus on the self and agency (Fivush 76). The two memoirs are meant to construct the self or a new cultural identity through cultural memories shared by the mnemonic communities to which the two abductees/adoptees belong and through making sense of these mnemonic narratives. The initial assessment seemed to yield a clear result in terms of interpreting Melanson's memoir as Eastern in the fact that it deals with her being part of the Navajo nation, concentrating on the idea of community and the relationships within it and Donda's memoir as Western, since it focusses on her making individual choices and decisions mainly looking towards the self and its agency. However, on a closer analysis one may notice other facts such as Melanson's combative tendencies and her decisions to create a business selling Native crafts and her activism in seeking a safer school environment for the young girls on the Reservations. In these cases, while her decisions are her own, the reverberations are obviously beneficial for the entire community or for a limited group within the tribe. Donda's memoir focuses on the road she takes in dealing with the new identity.

Personal memory is seen as autobiographical and it is dealing with the self, providing information about our lives and a sense of identity and continuity (Beike, Lampinen and Behrend 5). Lampinen, Odegard and Leding argue that while in adulthood we are not identical to who we were as infants or children, we do retain our identity since "the self is unified across time because we are motivated and able to create a story, a narrative that ties different aspects of the self together over time, the self is unified through memory and the process of narrative reconstruction" (229). This is precisely what the memoirs

written by Melanson and Donda attempt to do—to puzzle together the pieces of their past in order to achieve this unity through memory. The narrative structure of their memoirs helps Melanson and Donda "experience the self in a continuous fashion" (Lampinen, Odegard and Leding 230). In terms of the cultural traditions and experience, Melanson and Donda cannot simply construct a "sense of self that exists continuously across time" (Lampinen, Odegard and Leding 230) since they were barely starting to witness their cultures within the framework of their mnemonic communities when they were kidnapped. The fragmented sense of self and the discontinuity between Yvette Melanson and Analia Azic's sense of self and Minnie Bo Monroe's and Victoria Donda's sense of self across time—due to the discovery of their identities—are a perfect, if extreme, case of diachronic disunity. As defined by Lampinen, Odegard and Leding, diachronic disunity is understood as the failure to achieve a unified sense of self (as a mental construct) as a subject of experience and action at present (synchronically) and across time (diachronically). In addition, along the way to self-realization through political aspirations or a traditional vision quest, Melanson and Donda's sense of self is also characterized by synchronic disunity. In Victoria Donda's case, this is due to her feelings of outrage and love for her adoptive father. In Yvette Melanson's, it is her disbelief and finally feeling that she is home and feeling settled that reveal the synchronic disunity. These feelings of ambivalence are further exacerbated since she has to deal with two widely different cultures.

Robyn Fivush (75) discusses autobiographical memory as the story of one's life, as a coherent construct that explains one's identity. For Melanson and Donda this type of memory cannot be fully trusted. Their socially constructed autobiographies up to the ages of 43 (41) and 27 (25) fail to account for the cultural heritage they were denied since they were kidnapped and adopted. On finding their identities, the need to construct a new autobiographical life story emerges and this is achieved through their social reminiscing. Personal memory had been silenced, as had that of their biological families, clan, tribe, ethnic group, political group and nation. As "children need help from adults to create coherent narratives of past events" and Yvette Melanson and Analia Azic have been removed from their mnemonic communities as infants (before they could speak since in Latin *in+fans* has precisely this meaning of not being able to speak), they had not been socialized and therefore they lacked the fundamental understanding of the mechanisms required for "creating and maintaining coherent memories" (Fivush 89). The basic tools required for dealing with the creation of a cultural identity are one of the ingredients that the two adoptees have to acquire as adults and this acquisition will be part of their strategy in assimilating their cultural heritage by way of the cultural memories of their mnemonic communities.

By talking about one's memories with others, these "memories take on a canonical narrative form" (Fivush 89), they are told and retold and they become stories. Since their biological parents are absent from their lives and cannot act as guides in the reinterpretation of cultural and personal memories in order to make sense of them, the authors of the two memoirs assimilated a different set of mechanisms, traditions and ideologies. However, in order for them to become immersed in the culture from which they initially hailed, they have to undergo a process of socialization and cultural immersion. Of the two authors, it is Melanson who sets out to achieve this by moving to the Reservation at Tolani Lake, AZ. Victoria Donda, on the other hand, only travelled to Canada, where her biological extended family had relocated only when her grandmother's Alzheimer has threatened to remove forever any remembrances her mnemonic community might yield. Before taking these steps, their parents' identities and the cultural memories they could glimpse were not integrated with their sense of self. Perhaps, to a certain extent, this lack of understanding led to the "fragmented sense of self" (Fivush 89) the two of them had experienced. Once the mnemonic community performed its duty, the new cultural identity—achieved by way of the cultural and collective memory of the said community—has come together, allowing Yvette Melanson's wanderlust to subside and impelling Victoria Donda to pursue a political career that marks her as a chip off the old block.

For Benson (17) the 'self' charts the course of one's life and the way in which one navigates the world and it functions as a locative system. The way this works is that the 'self' functions as a way to locate someone as part of a certain culture. Therefore, the dislocation and repeated relocation of the two abductees when they were young and their final relocation as they were adopted into the Melanson and the Azic families, marked their transformation. Jonathan Glover considers that "self-creation depends on the beliefs we have about what we are now like: on the stories we tell about ourselves" (qtd. in Benson 74). Thus, there is a great difference between the stories Melanson and Azic tell about their lives in their adopted families and the ones they tell after their identity is revealed. In terms of self-creation, the beliefs Melanson and Azic held about themselves collaborated in creating their identity. Azic was unaware that she was adopted, while Melanson had been informed of that by her adoptive parents. Melanson believed she was white and Jewish, while Azic believed she was part of the family whose political ideology supported the 1976-1983 dictatorship.

Conclusions

The writers of the two memoirs retrieve their cultural identities and cultural memories through motion as movement through space, since they follow in the footsteps of their parents, literally and metaphorically. They also have to shed certain prejudices and to acquire new frames of reference. They navigate this new world and negotiate their new identities through heritage and self-creation, with a focus on the narrative creation of their new identity by means of writing their memoirs. They both listen to stories from the members of their rediscovered mnemonic communities and tell stories in their turn. The memoirs are a narrative retelling of the process of regaining their identity and represent an autobiographical memory, pieced together from stories told by others. Yvette Melanson and Victoria Donda reposition themselves by unifying elements of who they believed they were before encountering their original mnemonic communities and by adding to that identity the stories they are told. Thus, they make themselves in the act of making sense of themselves through telling stories (Benson 83).

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The Image of a Kanji—Cultural Memory as a Means of Education and Progress

Abstract: From ancient times Japanese have been exploiting the image in as many ways as possible and this fact has become nowadays a very good method of teaching and studying Japanese. If a student learns Japanese as a (main) specialty, there are multiple methods of studying it and finally, the level of knowledge has to be in accordance with the academic requests. But if students learn Japanese as a hobby, professors must find additional methods to make them understand and like it. In both situations, using Japanese culture elements might be useful. Teaching through "images" seems to be one of the methods that may help students make connections and remember certain topics. Japanese people used it in Linguistics, Literature, Art and the list is certainly longer. In the 5th century, when they took over and transformed the old Chinese characters in kanji, they used images in order to understand, transform and learn them better. Therefore, kanji became a means of written communication. My work tries to explain the importance of the kanji writing system and the "image" of a kanji, so that the readers that do not understand Japanese can become familiar with it (origin, structure, mnemotechnics).

Keywords: image, words, kanji, mnemotechnics, zōshi

Introduction

The "image" is a defining element in understanding the Japanese language and literature even in the 21st century. Image, literature and linguistics are in a permanent relation of interdependence and contextuality. Through literature, images that we can see or think about can be expressed and visualized, and through linguistics, literature can express accurately an image as the author wishes his/her readers to see, understand and perceive it.

From ancient to contemporary times, Japanese people have exploited the image in many different possible ways. First, they used the old Chinese characters and transformed them into a means of written communication, in the 5th century. Then, they created the origami, the art of paper folding, during the Heian Period[20]—and now widespread in all countries in multicultural exchange programs—, giving rise to a multitude of "images" that can represent an overwhelming diversity of elements of the surrounding environment. Then, during the 14th century, there appeared the *sōshi/zōshi* stories, where the image not only prevails but is absolutely necessary for understanding the story. Thus, we have to deal with three different types of images that may give birth to an equal number of communication means. The image always outputs "something" and that "something" always turns into communication, a *sine qua non* element of our existence. Thus, an image of an *ikebana* flower arrangement or a print on a *kimono* may display moments of seasons. Drawing pictures of comic books—*manga*—shows what type of audience a particular book is addressed to, not to mention the image of Hokusai's *Wave* [21] that gave rise to wonderful feelings that inspired Debussy, or Japanese gardens images, arranged in the *karesansui* style, in which the

[20] Heian Period (795-1185)—classical Japanese art and culture.

[21] *Katsushika Hokusai* (1760-1849) was a Japanese *ukiyo-e* painter.

* ukiyo-e, "pictures of the floating world," is a genre of paintings, lithographs or Japanese art made of blocks of wood, between the 17th and 20th centuries, whose leitmotiv is represented by landscapes, historical themes or scenes of drama and pleasure.

drawings on sand or the ones made with small stones may suggest the sea or wonderful islands. Starting from the Japanese proverb "A simple picture says more than a thousand words", I consider that the exploitation of an image may be done at any level and it can lead to all possible types of communication, whereas the whole universe and everything related to it represents an infinity of images. And any image representing "something" may "talk", communicate messages, express thoughts or feelings. Examples are so many, and therefore, I will summarize the main theme which discusses the image as a defining element in the understanding of Japanese characters - *kanji*.

Discussion

Regarding Japanese characters—*kanji*[22]—the image can be used both for teaching purposes, to explain their origin, as well as mnemonically—indicating some methods that can help in memorizing them. Kanji are originally Chinese ancient characters appeared more than 3,000 years ago. Initially, they represented simple illustrations of objects, natural phenomena or activities of daily life and, in time, they have turned into written communication methods, characterized primarily by pictographic and ideographic elements. Thus, each character has a meaning of its own. Ancient Chinese characters or *kanji* are classified considering also their origin and structure.

For example, there are characters—pictograms—derived from forms of concrete objects. Each image shows an immediate meaning of the character that derives from it. Therefore, the final graphic "product" is based upon and born from a simple "painting"—in this context—"image," and there is a striking similarity between the two of them. The determination of the final "product" is indeed a very logical one, so it is very easy to understand and remember.

1. sun/*hi*
2. moon/*tsuki*
3. tree/*ki*
4. mountain/*yama*
5. river/*kawa*
6. field/*ta*
7. person/*hito*
8. mouth/*kuchi*
9. car/*kuruma*
10. gate/*kado*

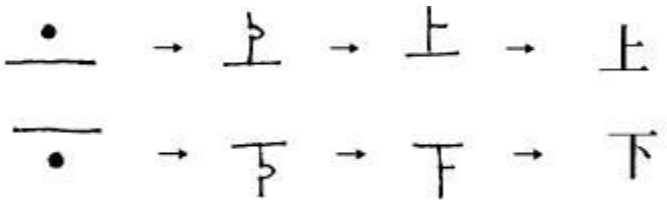
(Nishiguchi Koichi and Kono Tamaki, *Kanji in Context)*

[22] Kanji can be read in two ways. These two types of readings are *onyomi* and *kunyomi*, or reading (yomi) on (Chinese), and reading (yomi) kun (Japanese).
The Japanese language did not have written symbols until the introduction of *kanji*, from China, in the 5th century. Then *kanji* were simplified into phonetic symbols known as *hiragana* (a syllabary used for words of Japanese origin for which there is no *kanji*) and *katakana* (a syllabary used to write words of foreign origin already in the current language or not, onomatopoeia, or stylistically, instead of *kanji* and *hiragana* to put extra emphasis on some words). Thus, the Japanese language came to be written in a combination of *kanji* and *kana*. The combined writing system *kanji - kana* (a common name for *hiragana* and *katakana*) is more effective than the simple one, *kana*, since, when writing in the Japanese language no spaces between words are allowed and inserting *kanji* among *kana* can facilitate the reader to distinguish all the words. Moreover, when looking at a book, newspaper, or magazine, *kanji* are of great help in understanding the main ideas of a text in a certain context rapidly. The accompanying smaller kana written above kanji (called furigana) are sometimes used to indicate the correct pronunciation.

Simple ideograms or characters are composed of dots, points and lines to express abstract ideas. In this case, we can easily realize the significance of the image. The point above the line indicates that there is "something" on a certain place in the space, and the point below the line indicates that there is "something" under a certain place in the space.

on/*ue*

under/*shita*



(Nishiguchi Koichi and Kono Tamaki, *Kanji in Context)*

Compound ideograms consist of a combination of other characters. The juxtaposition of characters creates a different character here, but also here, the meaning of the last one can be easily interpreted by logical deduction:

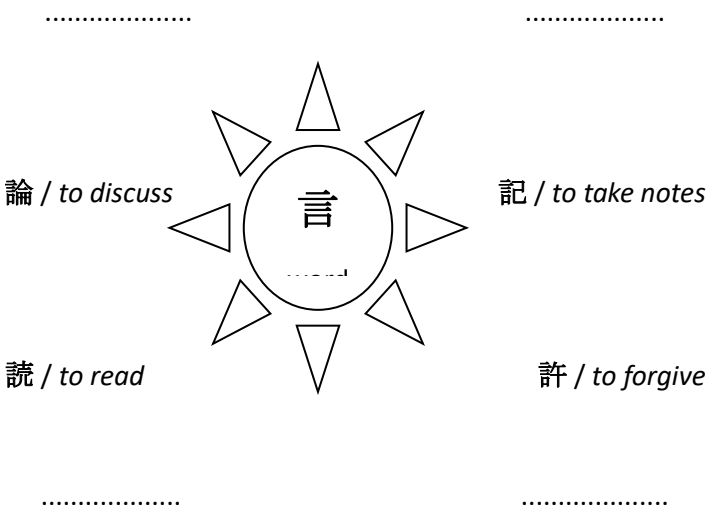
木 tree/*ki* ＋ 木 tree/*ki* ＝ 林 grove/ *hayashi* (few trees in a place)
林 grove/*hayashi* ＋ 木 tree/*ki* ＝ 森 forest, wood/*mori* (more trees in a place)
日 sun/*hi* ＋月 moon/*tsuki* ＝ 明 bright, light / *aka(rui*) (both sun and moon are bright and they give light)
人→亻 person/ *hito* + 木 tree/*ki* = 休 rest/ *yasumi* (a person that has some rest under the shadow of a tree)

A *kanji* may be composed of two or more elements, and parts of a *kanji* may appear in various combinations of other *kanji*. Some parts of them, common to several characters, are called radicals (*bushu*). Each radical has a basic meaning. Here we can find the role of the image. The "view" of such a radical can indicate precisely the meaning of the word (Nishiguchi 56).

For instance, the radical for "word" can be found in *kanji* used for "language," "story," “to talk," "to read," "to take notes," "to discuss," "to forgive/excuse." However, they have something in common with the radical of "word."

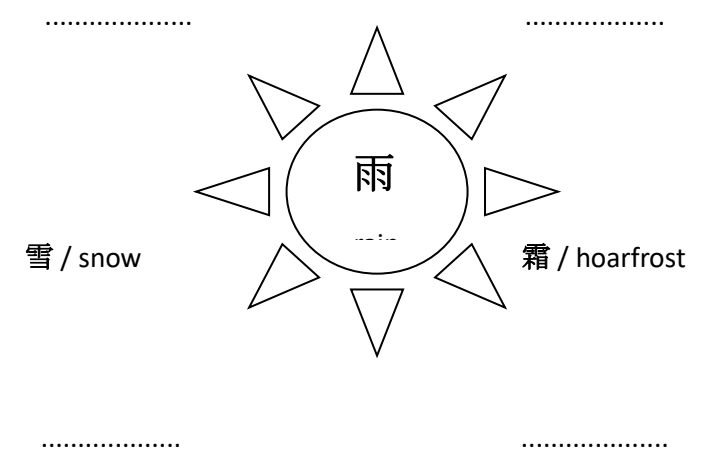
Another example is the radical "rain" that is used for more words related to rain, or weather, such as "thunder," "snow," "frost," "cloud." This kanji is included in the phonetic ideograms category.

語 / *language*



話 *story/ to tell a story /to talk*

雲 / *cloud*



雷 / thunder

Mnemonic methods applied in studying *kanji* are really very helpful. Many times, it is easy to remember a *kanji* if we try to find its logical content, or if we can find some correlations. For example, regarding the characters used for "right" and "left," we have the following explanations: "right" combines the elements of "hand" and "mouth"—people generally eat with their right hand, and "left" combines the

elements of "hand" and "carpenter's ruler"—a carpenter's ruler is always kept in the left hand, so he can use the right one to mark.

Right 右 =ナ *hand* + *mouth*

Left 左 =ナ *hand* + *ruler*

It is very interesting to notice that some *kanji* may have and/or show, besides the obvious graphic logic, also some references regarding mythological, historical, religious, social sources, maintaining and preserving the past so far, which is particularly important for the contemporary generation and continuous development of its cultural knowledge.

民 (*min*, *tami*) is the *kanji* for "nation," "people." This character was born in the form of an eye pricked by a needle. There is the theory that some slaves became blind after their leader pricked their eyes with a needle. Those blind people were called *min* or *tami* and they were seen as servants of the gods.

福 (*fuku*, *saiwai*) is the kanji for "good luck" / "fortune." It combines the shape of a wine cask—on the right side—and the one of a table—on the left. Thus people put on the table some sake and offered it to the gods while praying for happiness. This happiness, called *fuku* is actually a divine help and protection from the gods.

酒 (*shu*, *sake*, *saka*) is the *kanji* for "alcohol." *Yū*, the Rooster from the Chinese Zodiac, takes the form of a *bin* (recipient) for alcohol and the radical *sanzui*—that refers to water—is added to it. Therefore, by

derivation they give birth to the *kanji* for "alcohol." In the times of the Yin Dynasty,[23] when organizing festivals, people used to drink a lot of alcohol and it is said that that is why the dynasty was ruined and destroyed.

Conclusions

The number of characters is overwhelming and the multitude of their interpretations, too. To be able to memorize and interpret them, sometimes some little imagination and visual memory are needed, but many times, especially in their interpretation, the cultural level of a person may have more influence. This difficulty and the multitude of interpretations give an important role to the image that has always had a decisive place in the Japanese culture. In ancient times everything may have been guessed, supposed or interpreted from images. They were sometimes accompanied by words that added a plus of information, but the image was the one that spoke first, gave information and let the imagination of the observer decide cognitively what he could really see.

When we teach Japanese, we really need to find methods that help students remember some important topics that are absolutely necessary in order to let them understand the language and make them speak into that language. Moreover, in my opinion, these methods should be applied also in teaching students that study Japanese as their main specialty in the frame of the Bologna Process, since the Japanese language cannot be studied properly during the vocational three years and there are so many students that cannot advance to a master's degree.

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[23] The Yin and Shang Dynasty (Shāng Cháo) was the first imperial dynasty of the Chinese Empire leading the region in the northeastern part of China, in the Valley of the Yellow River. In accordance with the traditional chronology, the Shang Dynasty ruled China between 1766 BC and 1122 BC, and according to the shorter timeline based on the Bamboo Annals, between 1556 BC and 1046 BC.